



Class II 4

Book 1



KING GEORGE V. OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND
and
TSAR NICHOLAS II. OF RUSSIA

SOVEREIGNS *and* STATESMEN OF EUROPE

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"Memories of Forty Years"
"The Royal Marriage Market," etc., etc.

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INTRODUCTION

SOMEONE has remarked, with little truth and possibly as little wit, that in the twentieth century sovereigns are but a relic of a bygone age, and statesmen of problematic use now that we have the telegraph and telephone.

One has only to remember that the greatest war the world has ever seen was brought about by the will of ruling monarchs, and to observe how sovereigns personally have been leading their peoples in the crises that have arisen since Germany threw the gauntlet in the face of the civilised world, to become convinced of the falsity of such a straining after epigram.

Monarchs have become once more the arbiters of the destinies of their peoples by exercising their power and personal initiative to a far greater extent than any sovereign has been called upon to do since the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. During this last couple of years, too, diplomatists and statesmen—far more than Parliaments and people—have had to make momentous decisions on their own responsibility with a finality that allowed no time for redeeming mistakes.

I do not think that I am claiming too much in saying that when the terms of that peace for which the whole

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world is longing will have to be discussed, this personal initiative is sure to become even more important. It seems to me, therefore, that those who will have to stand before history as responsible for that peace deserve to be described and their characters to be studied.

Modern statesmen are very painstaking individuals; good workers for the most part, and honest men without doubt, but, if I am to speak quite frankly, I cannot find anywhere, except in England, diplomats of transcending genius.

I feel convinced that Britain will take the lead in the settlement; and as one of Russian birth I have the greater liberty to say that I believe British statesmen most fully possess the wisdom, political knowledge, and fine sense of proportion necessary to give the balanced consideration which comes of a long-sighted vision to the arduous and complicated questions which will arise at every step and turn.

Britain is the only country that had no need to fight. She took up the sword for the sake of a principle and out of respect for her own signature. Her chivalry in maintaining the rights of Belgium has assigned to her the foremost place in Europe, and most certainly has given her the moral as well as the material right to have a leading voice in future negotiations.

CATHERINE KOLB-DANVIN

(Princess Catherine Radziwill).

Sovereigns and Statesmen of Europe

I

RUSSIA

FOR the reason that my own native land of Russia lies nearest my heart it is my wish to start these pages, which tell of the political leaders of Europe, with those of the Great White Land over which the Romanoffs hold sway. The outstanding political personality in Holy Russia is the Tsar.

Nicholas II. has been a cruelly maligned man. Few sovereigns have had such terrible responsibilities to face, few have found themselves obliged to fight against such enormous odds as has Nicholas II. from the very first days of his accession to the throne.

When his father died Nicholas was still quite a young man, and more inexperienced than he ought to have been, because his education had been conducted on lines which compelled an implicit obedience to the will of his parents and an utter repression of any initiative he might possess. Alexander III., who perhaps remembered the difficult position into which he himself had been thrust during the

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last years of his father's reign—when, unwillingly, he had found himself looked upon as the head of a party of opposition to the throne—had determined never to allow his own son to suffer from the same hindrance.

Alexander III., therefore, had his heir brought up in such a manner that, when called upon to take up the sceptre, he would find himself unfettered, and free from any obligations contracted in regard to former friends. The young Grand Duke Nicholas had been kept far from the knowledge of State affairs, being trained in the same way as any officer obliged to work his way in the army, and dependent only upon his personal merits for advancement. He received, however, no initiation into the details of the administration of a great Empire, nor was he shown the difficulties which attached to Tsardom. The only cardinal principle, indeed, which had been impressed upon him was the very elementary axiom that, when he should come to the throne, his first care and thought must always be for the welfare of his country. It is said that Alexander III. had the idea that it was best for his son to receive his initiation into statecraft when he reached his thirtieth year. Then, Alexander thought, he would be able to give better attention to such matters, but during the earlier years his son should do nothing but amuse himself and enjoy a few years of peaceful unconcern before he was brought face to face with the realities of existence.

It must not be forgotten that in those days the late Tsar was a relatively young man, with a splendid physique

A Stroke of Destiny

and an excellent health. To all appearances he had long years of life before him, and he had the full expectation of being able to guide his heir's footsteps in political life, and also to instruct him according to his own ideas. Providence interfered, and Alexander III. succumbed to an insidious disease before even he had reached his fiftieth year, and also before his eldest son had had time to realise all the difficulties and grasp all the responsibilities of the task which so unexpectedly descended upon his inexperienced shoulders.

Until almost the last days of his father's life Nicholas had been treated as a child, not only by all his numerous uncles and aunts, but also by the few intimate friends of Alexander III., such as Count Woronzoff Dachkoff. Conceivably, therefore, it was difficult for them to readjust their ideas in a moment and at once to accord to him the honours due to a sovereign. Nicholas II. noticed that they did not immediately assume the respectful tone and demeanour due to the Tsar of all the Russias, and the circumstance did not please him. He resented it more than would have been the case had he possessed enough experience of life and of mankind to understand that this was almost inevitable for the time being, and things would very soon right themselves of their own accord. Timid by nature, he did not, perhaps, assume from the very first the dignified attitude of a monarch, and the consciousness that this was the case communicated to all his actions an indecision which was at once seized hold of by eager busybodies anxious to criticise the new Tsar.

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In reality few monarchs ascended their throne with such good intentions as Nicholas II. I will not go so far as to say that he wished, as some people have affirmed, to inaugurate a system of government akin almost to Constitutionalism. His famous reply to the address of the Zemstvo of Tver, indeed, points decidedly to the contrary; but it is certain that he seriously intended to rule his vast dominions with justice and in a liberal sense.

The new Tsar of all the Russias was kind of nature; he would never willingly have hurt anyone. His generosity was unbounded; indeed, in those early days he was reproached more than once for not grasping the real value of money. His consideration for others appeared in everything that he did, and the affection and respect with which he treated his widowed mother left nothing to be desired. He was an indulgent and tender husband, an excellent and devoted father, and a trustworthy friend. His heart had always been in the right place, and no one had ever appealed to his mercy in vain. He liked to give, to please those about him, and he loved his country perhaps not wisely but well, with a keen sense of his duty in regard to it.

That circumstances went against Nicholas II. is certainly not his fault, and can be attributed only to that detestable spirit of bureaucracy which has been the curse of Russia ever since the days of Peter the Great, whose genius did not go so far as to foresee all the evil it would do when no longer controlled by his iron hand. To bureaucracy and the police Russia owes many of its

Emperor Nicholas II.

past and present misfortunes, and every sincere Russian patriot ought to pray for the complete triumph of England. It is by the adoption of the English spirit of government alone that anything like a serious, useful political life can develop itself in Russia. Happily for Russia, the Emperor is keenly conscious of the fact, and is, perhaps, the most sincere admirer in Russia of English institutions.

More than once Nicholas II. has seen his best intentions either frustrated or misunderstood and misconstrued. When he succeeded to the throne his popularity for a brief space of time was very great and very real; then, unfortunately for him as well as for Russia, outside as well as family influences intervened, and, retiring and inexperienced as he knew himself to be, he did not feel courageous enough to allow himself to be guided by his instinct alone. There is certainly nothing of the nature of Peter the Great in the present Tsar, but there is undoubtedly more honesty in his character than in that of the famous reformer, and he would never consent to anything that he considered his conscience could not accept. That injustices have been committed in his reign cannot be contested, that cruelties, even, have been needlessly performed is also true; but no man can justly make the Tsar responsible for them. He is compelled to rely on others, whom he *must* trust to administer the details of his immense Empire.

The present Tsar has been given a bad name and the reputation of having a weak character, whilst in reality

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he has only had an extreme distrust in himself. Through his fear of not always doing the right thing, he allowed others to dictate to him and to explain to him things as *they* saw them, not as they really were.

From the first days of his reign Nicholas II. applied himself to the task of pleasing his subjects, even in insignificant things. When he appeared in public those with whom he conversed heard pleasant words which impressed them with the feeling that Nicholas was not entirely banal in his thoughts, but spoke with the sincere intention of interesting those to whom he was talking. That this was the case I had occasion to experience personally. At one of the first balls which were given in the Winter Palace by the present Empress, I found myself by chance in the vicinity of the Tsar as he was crossing a gallery which ran along the state apartments of the Imperial residence, when, seeing me, he approached and told me that he had been that very morning reading an old military report written a good many years ago by my father, and he added that he could remember seeing him one day in the late Emperor's study.

This little incident—which, I hope, the reader will forgive me for quoting—is but one of the many instances of the real kindness of heart of Nicholas II., who at the time I am alluding to was trying his best to become popular among all classes of society. Why his efforts were so misunderstood is a mystery to me; but misunderstood they were, and he very quickly noticed it,

The Tsar's Home Life

and, of course, was wounded to the quick by what he considered was the ingratitude of people whom he had done his best to propitiate.

In spite of all the troubles that were to fall upon him in such rapid succession the Tsar was supremely happy in his home, and found in the tenderness and devotion of his lovely consort, and in the love of his children, enough to satisfy him and to make him forget the depressions of sovereignty. Society and its pleasures did not appeal to him; and, besides, his life was so continually occupied, and his attention so much engrossed by serious subjects, that it is but natural he preferred spending his evenings by his own fireside to attending balls and festivities, for which neither he nor the young Empress had ever cared. He had realised that whatever he did he would be misunderstood, and that no one gave him credit for all the good which he had planned and, in certain instances, performed. A sense of irritation against those who were maligning him was the natural and inevitable result of his numerous disappointments, and this irritation manifested itself in an attitude of extreme reserve, which by and by took the place of the former amiability he had displayed so willingly whenever the opportunity to do so had occurred. Petrograd began to complain that the Sovereign avoided gracing with his presence public and private festivities which he had been expected to attend, and little by little a wall arose dividing the Monarch from his people, slowly but surely destroying his popularity.

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This was none of the fault of Nicholas II. : indeed, he was the first to deplore it. He did not, however, realise that an active remedy for so regrettable a situation lay in a closer union between the Tsar and his subjects based on personal intercourse. Instead, his love for solitude, which was shared by his consort, induced the young Sovereign to withdraw more and more from the world, and to confine himself to the society of a few trusted friends, who, if I may venture an opinion, were not the best he might have had.

In the lonely grandeur of Tsarskoye Selo, and of Livadia, in the Crimea, where the Imperial Family used to spend the autumn months, the Russian Monarch could not remain in that close touch and contact with his people which alone can ensure a nation's confidence in the Sovereign. All sorts of stories—unkind and untrue—began to circulate concerning Nicholas II. as well as the Empress, and soon they were enveloped in an atmosphere of gossip, until at last it became a popular belief that they did not care for Russia and that Russia did not care for them.

The enemies of the throne and of the dynasty believed in this legend, and tried to induce others, both at home and abroad, to believe in it too. It spread about with the rapidity lies always spread, and many of the misfortunes that have befallen Russia during the last fifteen years or so are due to the credence which it obtained, even among people who ought to have known better. In that respect Nicholas II. was decidedly unfortunate.

The Bureaucratic Machine

and in the choice which he made of certain advisers he was even more unlucky.

It is a curious fact, but one which no person at all well informed as to the existing order of things in Russia will deny, that there is a deplorable lack of real statesmen in this wonderful country of mine. Whether it is due to the influence of Liberalism, Socialism, Nationalism or any other "ism" I cannot say, but it is a fact that nearly all our leading men, until quite lately, have been essentially middle-class people, and as such could never understand or enter into the higher order of politics, such as they have been practised in England, for instance.

Russia's salvation would be to get rid of this particular and peculiar world of civil functionaries, among whom, much to the sorrow of all real patriots, most Ministers have been chosen. I do not wish to imply that these bureaucrats did not perform their duties conscientiously; but they did so like well-trained machines, without displaying any initiative, as would one of high and gentle birth. They simply followed the old routine they took up, just in the same manner as they sat down in a ministerial chair at a ministerial desk. None of them had statesmanlike instincts or applied himself to study the remote causes of a present evil, and none attempted any practical reform.

An exception was Count Witte, a really distinctive figure among the gallery of useful mediocrities who ruled over the destinies of Russia, yet who, to all the good schemes which Nicholas II. nursed in the silence of his

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heart and in the secret of his soul, opposed that stubborn resistance born out of respect for dead traditions.

Upon these men must be fixed the responsibility for most of the mistakes which brought about the reverses of the Japanese War, the revolution which desolated the country for something like three years, the perpetual antagonism which from the first day of the assembling of a Duma—this magnificent concession to public opinion was entirely the work of the present Tsar—existed between it and the responsible Government, and, finally, the errors and the want of foresight that, after the glorious opening of the present war, have deprived my nation of its early successes and brought Russia face to face with a foreign invasion of some of its most fertile provinces. To fix this responsibility on Nicholas II. would be a cruel and wicked injustice, for none in all his immense Empire has suffered more from it than he has.

It is a great, a very great, pity indeed that until quite recently the Emperor could not bring himself to have more confidence in his own judgment and in his own instincts as to what is good for Russia. If this realisation had dawned upon him a few years earlier it would have been an all-round advantage. The war, which is changing many things, is bringing to the Tsar a fuller knowledge of the strength of his own personality. He is discovering himself, and the Russia of to-morrow will benefit vastly thereby.

Nicholas II. has more than an average share of good sound common sense; his decisions, too, are generally

The Salvation of Russia

right—at least, in so far as things are presented to his judgment. Left alone, it is quite certain that he would never have invented the multitude of laws which annoy and sometimes unfairly act upon the peaceful people who aspire to nothing else but to be allowed to exist quietly, without interference from the police or other authorities. Unfortunately, the Emperor is surrounded by persons who are limited in their intelligence and restricted in their views. They see the salvation of Russia in a system of government founded on suspicion, and perpetually keep looking for an imaginary plot against the person of the Sovereign and the safety of his counsellors.

All through the Japanese War, and during the years that followed upon it, the Tsar allowed the people to whom I have just been referring to have it all their own way, until tyranny became the rule in Russia. In that respect Count Witte was an exception, but, then, he was one of the rare real statesmen of modern Russia, and he looked at things from all the height of a magnificent intelligence.

Gifted with extraordinary self-control and considerable dignity, Count Witte held the opinion that a minister or a statesman in an executive position ought before everything else to shield his sovereign, and, if need be, to assume on his own head the weight and the responsibility of any mistake which this sovereign might have been led into by the force of circumstances. When the Count signed the Treaty of Portsmouth he did so without

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referring its clauses to the Tsar. He acted in general accord with the instructions which Nicholas II. had personally given to him before he departed for America, and when asked why he had not thought it necessary to send one last telegram to Tsarskoye Selo before acquiescing to the Japanese demands, Count Witte merely replied: "I would not be a patriot if I did not reserve to my master the right and the possibility to disavow me, or even to punish me, should he deem that I have not sufficiently taken care of Russia's interests or Russia's dignity." The reply is quite worthy of a real statesman, and even if Richelieu had worded it otherwise he could not have taken exception to it.

In spite of this singularly great feature of his, in so many respects, remarkable character, Count Witte was not the man capable of bringing about that regeneration of Russia which was so ardently desired by all true patriots. Though no one seemed to be aware of that fact at the time when the Count was at the head of the first Constitutional Ministry which Russia saw come into existence, the Emperor realised it, and grasped it at once. In this Nicholas evinced his keen insight into the needs of his country. He loves Russia; he would like above all things to see her prosperous and great. He realises very well, too, not only the difficulties that stand in his way to bring this desire of his heart into execution, but also the sad fate which has never given him the collaborators fitted for the high task.

People have remarked that the Emperor did not show

Ideals of Nicholas II.

the same confidence in himself which distinguished his late father and which made him rely entirely on his own personality to impose his will on his surroundings. It must not be forgotten, however, that when Alexander III. assumed supreme power he was something like ten years older than his son was when the latter ascended the throne; that, moreover, he had occupied responsible positions, had taken part in a serious and glorious war (that of 1877, against Turkey), and that he had gathered an experience not vouchsafed to Nicholas II.

Considering all these facts, therefore, one can but wonder at the few mistakes made by the present Tsar during the first years of his reign. The world did not know that the Sovereign whom it believed to be entirely selfish was perpetually revolving in his mind how he could be of use to his people, what reforms he could undertake, and how he could best come into personal contact with the nation. His prodigious power did not make him happy, and more than once he was heard to express the regret that, notwithstanding the extent of his power, it availed him but little in ameliorating the condition of many of his subjects. If ever monarch loved the nation over which he ruled, it is Nicholas II.

Fictions have been put into circulation concerning the granting of the semi-constitution which Russia is enjoying to-day, and people have been led to believe that it had been imposed on the Tsar by the rebellion of his subjects. In reality nothing of the kind took place. The Emperor had all along cherished the idea of inviting

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the representatives of Holy Russia to help him in his stupendous task. It was he who first mentioned it to his Ministers; he who called upon them to draw a plan embodying the best means of carrying out his intentions. He knew very well that he had to move with his times, that the era of absolute, autocratic government was passed, and that the sooner Russia tried to follow in the footsteps of constitutionalism the better it would be for her future security and greatness.

Nicholas II. had spent some weeks in Great Britain during his engagement to the granddaughter of Queen Victoria, and he had employed them in a careful study of English institutions and the English character. All that he had seen had filled him with the greatest admiration, and though he realised very well that it was impossible to expect Russia to reach at a leap the degree of civilisation which had put the British race at the head of everything that is free and enlightened in Europe, still he believed and hoped that, with time, parliamentary administration might become established in his realm, and that he might find among the men sent by the votes of his people to represent them some fitted to aid him in ruling Holy Russia.

The experiment failed in the beginning because the country was not ripe for it, and because that first Duma, the assembling of which was compared to that of the States General in France on the eve of the great revolution, contained no men strong enough to become its leaders. There were plenty of intelligent people, but

The Duma in Evolution

these mostly were lawyers, and Russia did not yet—and, for the matter of that, does not now—appreciate eloquence of the order which moves the masses in France or even in England. Russia knew and understood that she had needs which required urgently to be attended to, evils which had to be redressed, and she would not content herself with words as the sole reply to her appeals for help.

The Emperor understood, too, perhaps before even the nation did. There was no hesitation in his mind on the subject. He had willingly abdicated part of his authority in order to assure the prosperity of his country, and he did not intend the sacrifice to remain a useless one. When he realised that the first Duma did nothing beyond discussing Utopianisms, he had no hesitation in dismissing it and ordering new elections. The action caused violent discussions, and was bitterly condemned even by people of moderate opinions. Events proved that it had been a wise move, because, little by little, the country got used to the new machinery which had been set in motion, and parliamentary debates assumed a dignified character, reminding one, if only from afar, of those in other countries where constitutional government had been long established. The Duma ceased to be an assembly of talkers, becoming, little by little, a parliament worthy of the name, and lately, during the debates which took place after the declaration of war, it has shown a high patriotism and a strong sense of knowledge of its duties.

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That this was so is entirely due to the patience displayed by the Emperor, who, when urged, as he was repeatedly, to put an end to the shadow of constitutional government which he had evoked, refused to do so. Nicholas remained strongly faithful to his opinion that the day would come when the Duma would awake to the realisation of what Russia expected from it, and that, instead of being the danger which some foolish people assured the Tsar it would be, it would become a strong help to him in administering affairs of the Empire. The opinion was criticised even among the Sovereign's personal friends, who could not understand the extreme patience which he displayed under considerable provocation. But Nicholas II. was right, and in the course of time he had his reward.

But, for all its value, the Magna Charta of Russia did not bring the Tsar near to his subjects. The famous Manifesto of October 17th, which heralded the dawn of that new day in Russian history when its monarchy passed from absolute autocracy into the freedom of constitutional government, was received with immense enthusiasm. The fervour did not last, however, because the revolution which unfurled its banner at that time engrossed public attention, and by the stern repression with which it was met gave the nation the idea that there had been nothing sincere in the Manifesto, and that in reality it had only been an attempt to pacify the discontented.

The Emperor had expected, if not gratitude, at least

The Magic of War

justice from his people; he found nothing but criticism of the most bitter nature directed against his person, and it is no wonder that this attitude made him sad and melancholy, and more than ever inclined to retire into a solitude where, at least, he could not hear the clamours of discontent with which the whole of Russia resounded in those perilous days.

This estrangement, once it had begun, was not easy to put an end to. It is to be questioned whether it ever would have ceased, and the good intentions of the Tsar become recognised and appreciated at last by his people, had not the war of 1914 arrived, and by magic brought close together the Sovereign and the whole of the 170 millions of his subjects.

By his recent decision to take personal command of his armies he has made his people prouder of him, even, than when they learned, in the earlier phases of the war, that, entirely upon his personal initiative—as was related by people familiar with all that goes on at Tsarskoye Selo—Nicholas II. determined to pay regular visits to the front and to inspect personally numerous of the hospitals scattered about Russia, coming thus into immediate contact with his people, listening to their complaints, entering into the details of their existence, and seeing himself into their needs and requirements.

It is an open secret now that no one, even among the extreme Radical party, has anything but kind words to say about the Tsar. Russia has learned to know him at last. She has met him at the bedside of his

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wounded soldiers, has followed his movements at the front, encouraging his army, sharing their perils, and hoping together with them for better days.

Russia has seen that Nicholas II. is not a hard and cruel Sovereign, but a kind father, whose affectionate blue eyes filled with tears whilst looking at the woes of his Empire, and who, amidst the horrors of a most brutal and inhuman war, was occupied in planning how to alleviate them and to bring some joy, or at least some comfort, to the victims of the conflict. The paternal solicitude of the Tsar for his stricken soldiers, the devotion shown by the Empress and by her daughters to the sick and to the wounded, won the day, and at last made the country realise that Nicholas II. himself deserved nothing but love and respect from everybody, even from those whose political opinions were antagonistic to monarchical principles in general.

After the first few months of the war the Emperor found, for the first time since his accession to the throne, that his authority was no longer disputed, and though it is most likely that this present war will, in Russia at least, be followed by a revolution, it is certain that it will be a revolution which will not aspire to deprive the Romanoffs of their crown, though it may aim at destroying their former advisers and will make havoc with bureaucratic tyranny; and this none hates more than Nicholas II. himself.

The pathetic side of the Tsar's life is the scarcity of real friends with whom he can discuss current events

Nicholas II. and His Ministers

with absolute liberty, and without fear that what he may say will be liable to misinterpretation. His relations with the Grand Dukes, his uncles and cousins, are more or less stiff, and there is little intimacy between them. Perhaps the great difference in their rank contributes to this regrettable state of things; but the fact remains that, with the exception of the Grand Duke Nicholas, none of the members of the Imperial Family find themselves called upon by their chief to give him an opinion of their own on public affairs.

Between Nicholas II. and his Ministers no discussion is possible; the latter invariably say "Yes" to all the Emperor's instructions, and do nothing of what he orders them to perform. The solitude of the Sovereign is absolute, and, unfortunately for him, the great distance which separates him from his cousin, King George V., for whom he feels such a deep affection, prevents him from resorting to the latter's sound advice as often as he would like to do.

In spite of all these handicaps the authority of Nicholas II. increases every day, and when peace comes to be discussed he, rather than his Ministers, will have the final decision so far as Russia is concerned. The advisers of the Emperor will naturally have to conduct the negotiations, but it is he, and he alone, who will pronounce the last word. The reign of Ministers is past. For this the whole of Russia should feel grateful to the Tsar, and should accept all that the future holds in reserve for the nation, good or bad, without murmuring, as it

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did after the Treaty of Portsmouth, when Count Witte was accused of having sacrificed the interests of his country to a false assessment of its strength.

When one takes into consideration this fact, and also remembers that in all things the Emperor Nicholas will act in perfect unison with King George V., even the anxious and timorous people who keep doubting as to the conditions under which, at last, peace will be restored to the world need not fear that either the interests of Russia or of Great Britain will have to suffer.

I have mentioned Revolution. Many people think that Russia stands on the brink of one, and I am not far from sharing the opinion that it is bound to occur soon after the war has come to an end, and perhaps even before it is ended. But, as I have suggested, it will not be a revolution directed against the dynasty. Indeed, I believe that, with his strong common sense, the Tsar will be able to turn such an event towards the consolidation of his House upon the throne.

There has been more than one ministerial change lately in Russia, and all the new men who have been invited to enter the Cabinet—such as Count Paul Ignatieff (the son of the late Ambassador who at one time had held Russian prestige so high in Constantinople) or Prince Nicholas Stecherbatoff (who recently took upon himself for a time the heavy and difficult duties of Minister of the Interior)—are of the Liberal thought in the sense that they would like their country to be governed otherwise than by police methods. Without

M. Sazonov and Peace

exception they have been chosen by the Sovereign himself, who during the journeys that he has lately undertaken all over Russia has been able more accurately to grasp the real necessities of his people. If the ultra-Conservative elements which up to the present have governed Russia do not succeed in harassing these men so much that they will be forced to retire, then it is most likely that the revolution which is being prepared at present will turn out to be a peaceful one, and that it will end by a closer union between the Tsar and his subjects.

Before that day dawns, however, the question of the eventual peace will absorb public opinion. We may well look around us, therefore, and inquire who will be the men whom Nicholas II. will appoint to represent him at that momentous conference.

First and foremost there is M. Sazonov, who perhaps has had to bear one of the heaviest burdens of the international situation as it has developed since the day Germany threw her gauntlet in the face of the whole of Europe. There have been many rumours going about concerning M. Sazonov lately. The busybodies of Petrograd have been saying that his position is shaken and that his health has become indifferent, two circumstances which would foreshadow his retirement from the political scene. I am not in a position to state whether there is any truth in all these reports. That the Russian Foreign Minister's health has suffered from the strain to which it has been subjected of late would not be a matter

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of surprise for anyone, the more so that he has never been a very robust man; but it is hardly likely that the Tsar would care to deprive himself, at a moment when his experience would be invaluable to his country, of the services of the man who, better than anyone else, has knowledge of all the intricacies of a situation that has developed under his very eyes.

Ever since the first Balkan War M. Sazonov worked in the cause of peace, and it is not his fault that he failed. Some of his adversaries assert that in his desire to avoid war he went farther than he ought to have done, and made more concessions than was consistent with the dignity of Russia. This may have been—it is not for me to judge of this delicate point; but, if he did so, it was entirely from humanitarian motives, and perhaps also because he realised, if others did not, all the consequences which a conflict with Austria was bound to bring in its train. M. Sazonov is essentially an honest man; a kind one, too, and his soul recoiled at the thought of the misery which a war, even if triumphant for Russian arms, would inflict. He did all that lay within his power to avert such a catastrophe, and who can blame him for having done so? But at last even his long-suffering patience revolted, and with the consciousness of the dignity of his country he proudly replied to Count von Pourtalès (the German Ambassador) that he refused to recognise the arrogant ultimatum he had presented.

At this grave juncture M. Sazonov revealed himself

Personality of M. Sazonov

such as he was—serious, earnest, gifted with sound common sense, and fully alive to the responsibilities that lay upon his shoulders. He never belonged to those who rush into a decision, and the torrent of complications with which he found himself surrounded made him even more careful than usual.

More than once he had been accused of being wanting in courage and fearful of expressing his opinions in presence of serious opposition. I do not think that this reputation was justified at any period of his career. M. Sazonov is essentially a cautious man; but this does not mean that he is a timorous one, though his attitude gives sometimes the impression that this might be the case. He seldom tells you immediately what he thinks, and never allows you to guess what it is he suspects. His extreme reserve is more reticence than anything else, and the thing one is the most inclined to forget when talking with him is the position which he occupies as the man to whom has been entrusted the task of representing Russia in the face of foreign ambitions and foreign competition in the domain of politics.

He is not a leader, and probably realises himself that such is the fact. And because he has not the diplomatic temperament, and consequently can give his whole care to what I would call the drudgery of politics, studying them to the core and seeing many pitfalls which a more brilliant mind would not notice, he is the greater success in his difficult portfolio. His attention to trifles is wonderful, and after all it is trifles which often decide

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the most momentous questions in this world. In co-operation with Sir Edward Grey, or with Lord Lansdowne, M. Sazonov can render inestimable service; whilst, left alone to his own devices, he will never commit any serious mistake, because he will always think twice before coming to any decision, and so avoid doing anything capable afterwards of being interpreted in two different senses.

Whether he will remain at the head of the Foreign Office until the end of the war it is impossible to tell. He has many enemies, especially among the Liberal parties, who accuse him of harbouring Slavophil opinions to an extent rather alarming for a man placed in his responsible position. I do not, however, believe that he carries them to a dangerous point, but it is sufficient that he is credited with them for people to predict his retirement from his office in case the Slavophil policy of Russia suffers a check. All the same, it is safe to assume that, even in the improbable case that his portfolio passes into other hands, he will be called upon to have a voice in the negotiations which will precede the conclusion of a definite treaty of peace.

It is hardly possible for M. Sazonov to be passed over. He is blessed with a wonderful memory, and this quality is more than useful in such grave emergencies as those which may crop up at any moment before peace is at last restored to the world. He is thoroughly trustworthy, a man with high principles and a strong sense of honour; no match, perhaps, for an

M. Kokovtsov

unscrupulous politician, but a respectable figure in the sense that he will never commit himself to a reprehensible action. His intelligence has been discussed, his personality has been criticised, but his honesty has never been suspected; and though he never understood in what consisted the real politics pursued by Germany, yet he fought them by instinct, and refused to associate himself with them, even where they seemed to everybody but himself to be devoid of any evil intentions.

Next to M. Sazonov comes M. Kokovtsov. It is possible that he may be appointed as one of the Russian delegates at the peace conference. He was Finance Minister for a good many years, and as such acquired a profound and intimate knowledge of the economical condition of his country. He is very well aware of the nature and of the extent of its resources, and from that point of view his co-operation might be advantageous to the Empire. He is credited, however, with being far too fond of the sound of his own voice, and has an exaggerated idea of his facility in speaking foreign languages—a trait which is noticeable among other middle-class people whose early surroundings did not entitle them to the right of expressing themselves in any other idiom than their own. It is the saddest part of M. Kokovtsov that he is middle class, in spite of all his efforts not to appear so. His intelligence is like his clothes: too well brushed, and seems to come fresh from the tailor, or from the school-benches. He was given an excellent instruction by his most respectable parents,

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but his education—which is often found where instruction does not exist—was acquired later in life, and consequently has kept the appearance of being something new, and quite as uncomfortable. He always seems to be wearing his boots for the first time and not feeling quite at home in them.

His career has been one of rapid and well-deserved progress. An excellent clerk in his early days, he has proved a most capable official in his later ones. As a Minister he showed considerable ability, but was perhaps more brilliant than was necessary in some cases and not impartial enough in others. He had little tact, or he would not have been so eager to share his impressions with the first person who cared to hear them; but he had a great knowledge of the world, understood marvellously how to get rid of rivals, and how to pacify grumblers. He administered the finances of his country in a masterly way, and diligently fostered both industrial and commercial development. He took special pains, also, to win the favour of all the financial magnates of Europe, and the gratitude of the capitalists, great and small, of his own land. Jews found him lenient in regard to them; and he never showed himself a fanatic in anything. He might have been a statesman if he had only possessed a little more backbone, and if he had been born in another sphere where the possession of a title is not looked upon as the greatest felicity a man can aspire to. As it is, he proved himself to be a most excellent functionary, and it was not his fault that he came in time to forget that

Count Kokovtsov and the Emperor

such was the case, and to fancy himself a leader of the men who led him.

His supreme ability was demonstrated when he resigned his functions as Premier, on realising that they were too much for him and that his further tenure of office might endanger the reputation he had acquired of being a great Minister. M. Kokovtsov had never been quite liked by the Emperor, but the Minister had never given the Tsar real reason to dismiss him, and Nicholas II. was far too just to make a man bear the brunt of his personal antipathies when there was nothing else against him. So that when Nicholas came to say good-bye to a Minister who had done his duty all the time that he had been in office, he did so with grace, and before M. Kokovtsov left he had bestowed upon him the title of Count, which had been for long the object of all his secret ambitions and longings.

When the war broke out there were people who declared that M. Kokovtsov ought to be recalled and put once more at the head of the Russian finances which he had conducted with such ability for so long. The Tsar, however, would not hear of it, and it is an open question whether the former Premier would have cared to accept office. He was far too shrewd to desire his return to office in the troubled circumstances in which his country found itself. There had been a time when he had coveted the position of Russian Ambassador in Paris, where his thorough knowledge of the French language would have proved of good use to him; but now he congratulated

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himself on this perilous responsibility having been refused him.

It can be assumed with tolerable certainty that M. Kokovtsov will be one of the delegates entrusted with the mission of watching over the interests of Russia in the future congress. He is sure to make his voice heard. He is, though pacific and a model of courtesy, yet very firm sometimes, and most opinionated in his convictions. He has a more subtle mind than M. Sazonov, and in general is a perfect type of that kind of man described by Montaigne in the famous words, "*ondoyant et divers*"; but he hates not to play first fiddle, and for this reason may not prove of such assistance as his former colleague in the Ministry.

M. Kokovtsov has one great quality: he never loses his temper. He has mastered the science of always keeping his feelings under control, and this may prove of great service both to him and to his colleagues. The financial knowledge and experience of M. Kokovtsov are almost unique in Russia at the present moment, especially since the death of Count Witte has removed the only serious rival whom he had possessed in that domain. For that reason I have thought it well to give him a few words of description in the gallery of pictures which I am trying to present to my readers. Whatever may be his defects, he is still an interesting figure. Though not a statesman in the real sense, he would no doubt make an excellent ambassador, just as he made an excellent Minister, but his initiative is extremely limited.

M. Bark and War Finance

and even where it makes itself felt it is only the initiative peculiar to the middle ranks of civil functionaries that, in Russia at least, constitute quite a small though a most powerful caste, and of which M. Kokovtsov is such a thorough personification.

M. Bark, who was appointed to the Ministry of Finance in the early months of 1914, has been closely associated with the English Lloyd George and the French Minister in the financial problems of the present war. Nevertheless, I have the feeling that, even if included in the representatives of Russia at the Peace Negotiations, M. Bark will not have a leading voice on behalf of his country.

Among the other members of the present Government in Russia is one whose name more than once has been put forward as a candidate for the Premiership. I am thinking of M. Krivocheïne, one of the ablest men among all those who are in the Ministry, a thorough gentleman, and an honest functionary in the highest sense of that word. Entrusted for a considerable number of years with the administration of the domains of the Crown, he showed not only great ability in the handling of the numerous difficulties he had to contend with on the part of the army of small functionaries who work in that department, but also an integrity above praise and sound principles, which would have shone even in a better light if his duties had had to do with higher politics, and not been confined to a particular branch of administration. M. Krivocheïne is respected by all those who

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know him, and enjoys a considerable reputation, not only in Petrograd, but all over Russia. He is an enlightened, well-bred and well-read man, one gifted with a strong individuality, and who, moreover, has the advantage of being thoroughly acquainted with the opinions, as well as with the hopes and political aspirations, of his country. Though a Conservative, he is yet a Liberal in the best sense of the word, inasmuch as he professes a profound respect for the private convictions of every man or woman he meets. There is nothing despotic about him, yet his character is wonderfully firm, and when once he has made up his mind to do something it becomes excessively difficult to persuade him to change. He keeps his word when once given, but does not give it easily; and, intelligent by nature, he has acquired considerable instruction not only on school-benches, but also through contact with life and the study of books, of which he is a great reader.

M. Krivocheïne is the only Minister in Russia at the present moment—or, rather, was the only one, because the appointment of Prince Stcherbatoff to the Home Office has given him a colleague in that respect—who, whilst very Russian in all his ideas and views, yet has become cosmopolitan in the broad manner in which he examines and gives his attention to all the problems he is confronted with. He was not a *Tchinownik*, to use the familiar expression employed in Russia to designate the class of civil functionaries from which Ministers are generally chosen, but he could lay claims to be considered

M. Krivocheïne

a statesman, as in truth he is. If he were chosen to represent his country during the future congress, he would defend its interests and carry its flag very high whilst doing so, and he would also be able to discuss with his foreign colleagues all the knotty and unforeseen incidents which would be bound to crop up with a warmth and at the same time a coolness and presence of mind which they would find more than their match. M. Krivocheïne seldom gets excited, and cuts short any attempts of others to do so with curt, trenchant words that bring matters back to a ground where he can handle them to his interlocutor's disadvantage. It is quite certain that the presence of M. Krivocheïne among the representatives of Russia at a congress would considerably strengthen the cause of the Allies, and that even first-rate diplomats, such as Lord Lansdowne, for instance, would find his co-operation a valuable asset.

I think that there is very little reason to doubt that M. Gorémykin will be one of those whom the Tsar will entrust with the task of watching over Russian interests when peace comes to be discussed. M. Gorémykin is the veteran statesman of Russia. Under Alexander III. he occupied important and responsible posts, and his appointment to the leadership of the Russian Cabinet, about eighteen months ago, was hailed with enthusiastic approval by nearly all parties. He is a clever, an intelligent, open-minded man, and a conscientious Minister, who would never allow himself any arbitrary action, and who receives with freedom of mind, and sometimes even

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with satisfaction, other opinions than his own. Very enlightened, very cultivated, very well-intentioned, he has strongly that high belief of the dignity, greatness and resources of his country, without which no statesman can be really great nor become truly useful. Everybody respects him; but he is more than seventy years old, and at that period of life it is hardly possible to preserve the full energy of one's fighting qualities and to hold one's own amidst the fire of rival competitors. M. Gorémykin alone would find far too heavy for his frail shoulders the weight of having to come forth as the champion of his fatherland's rights and pretensions, but, backed as he will be by younger men, his venerable presence will prove of immense advantage to the cause of the Allies, as the respect which surrounds him will ensure him the privilege of being always listened to with attention and care. It is known that he is not the man ever to say aught but what he thinks, and that he would never consent to dishonour his white hair by telling an untruth. Moreover, he enjoys the confidence of his Imperial master, with whom he has always talked frankly and whom he has never deceived.

As a matter of course, military experts will have to be appointed to discuss frontier limitations, as well as other points connected with the establishment of a permanent peace. I have no hesitation in saying that on that ground there is very little hope that Russia can come out with flying colours, and that the best thing she could do, under circumstances such as have developed

The Grand Duke Nicholas

recently, would be to ask England to defend her interests in this respect. The Russian Military Staff are far too opinionated to be granted special powers in connection with such a delicate thing as a military adjustment must necessarily be. For one thing, they do not realise their own shortcomings; for another, they do not possess the requisite knowledge of diplomacy; and last, but not least, they would ask too much at first, and in the end surrender far too willingly what in reality they could hold. Their War Office wants a good deal of reconstruction before it can expect to hold its own with the French or English institutions.

If the Russian General Staff has to be consulted concerning the possible conditions under which we could consent, with our Allies, to lay down the sword which we have been compelled to take up, then it is certain that it will be the Grand Duke Nicholas alone who will have the leading voice in the matter. This cousin of the Tsar is a curious figure, and he has managed to secure for himself the hatred of a number of people, whose vindictiveness even goes so far as to criticise his military dispositions. Placed as he is at a height where criticism cannot touch him, and where, on the other hand, flattery has been lavished upon him with a profusion which more than once has disgusted him, he has nevertheless always had the merit of trying honestly and patiently to do his duty and of watching over the welfare of the vast armies confided to his care with unflagging attention. During his military career the Grand Duke Nicholas has tried

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by all means in his power to stamp out abuses, to exact from his subordinates strict obedience, and to see that his soldiers were properly taken care of, both mentally and physically. In carrying out these reforms he showed himself merciless in regard to officers who had failed to carry his commands into execution, and though he was disliked by the latter, the ranks of the army soon learned to respect him and give him their affection.

Prior to the Great War the Grand Duke Nicholas was not perhaps considered a great general, but no one could refuse him the merit of having been a good and conscientious one. What failed him most was his inability to carry the masses with him. This, perhaps, was more the consequence of his high rank than anything else. He has been reproached recently for the ruthlessness with which he is alleged to have sacrificed human life, but it should not be forgotten that for the tremendous slaughter which took place in Galicia, and during the long fights in the Carpathian mountains, he could not be entirely blamed. Moreover, there were high political reasons for Russia's forward movement at that period of the war. Those directly responsible for the losses were the generals, who had not sufficient courage to reveal to him the difficulties of the military situation, and who threw their forces against an enemy far superior in numbers and in ammunition without referring to the Grand Duke as they ought to have done. Only people who do not know inner history see something derogatory to the military reputation of the Grand Duke in his

The Question of Munitions

transference to the Caucasus consequent upon the 'Tsar's decision to assume supreme command.

Of course, the future position of the Grand Duke depends a good deal on the fate of the campaign. Some hasty people blame him for want of foresight and for the "strategical reasons," to use the phrase employed in all the communications from the Headquarters Staff, which induced him to withdraw his troops before the advancing masses of the German and Austrian armies. The public forgets entirely that it required more than ordinary courage to start upon such a course in face of the almost general opposition with which it was received and met. The fact is that Nicholas Nicolaievitch had realised that what had to be avoided at all costs was to engage his armies in a battle when he had not the absolute certainty of victory on his side, and the retreat which he ordered was perhaps the cleverest move he could possibly have made.

The question of ammunition was the gravest one that had arisen during the whole course of the war up to that moment. Had its scarcity been confined to Russia, the Russian public would have had the right to blame the Grand Duke; but, as facts have shown, in all the countries engaged in the struggle it was the same story, and none among the Allies had realised the incredible vastness of the number of shells necessary until they were brought face to face with the immense superiority of Germany in that respect. They all had to resign themselves to play a waiting game until they had

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obtained the shell and shrapnel without which it was impossible for them to think of advance.

The Grand Duke was also accused of not having gauged rightly the dangers of the military situation ; but he absolutely ignored the attacks directed against his person, and applied himself with a dogged determination to remedy the evils he had not been able to avoid, and meantime to play a game of patience, which he had every reason to expect would end to his advantage.

Should, however, his expectations, together with those of the whole of Russia, not be realised, the great services which he has rendered to his country will not be diminished by the fact. On the contrary, his strong qualities will shine with even more brilliance. He may lose battles, but he will never forgo the esteem of Russia or of its Sovereign. It is, therefore, more than likely that when peace comes to be discussed his views will be consulted and his advice acted upon by his Imperial nephew.

After the Grand Duke Nicholas it is likely that General Ruzsky will be consulted upon the military aspect of the situation. The General has been so far the only lucky commander in the war. It was he who at the beginning of the campaign brought his army under the walls of Lemberg and entered that town as its conqueror. Ruzsky is an excellent tactician and an able administrator, and it is very much to be regretted that his health broke down and obliged him to seek a rest he much needed.

General Béliaev

Another who will be asked to advise will probably be General Béliaev, one of the ablest officers whom our staff possesses, and who was called upon not long ago to be the right-hand man of the newly appointed War Minister. General Béliaev is relatively a young man, hardly more than fifty, I should think. He has a pleasant, gentlemanly, sympathetic appearance, and his strategical talents are declared by competent people to be something quite out of the common.

I have spoken about those statesmen to whom public opinion points as likely to be put on the list of candidates for the responsible task of discussing with Germany the conditions under which the world may hope to see the end of the carnage; but there are other men in Russia who most probably will have a good deal to do with the future development of the Empire. These are mostly new-comers, in the sense that they have not made their career in the different public offices of Petrograd, whence it was a tradition that Ministers were to be chosen. There is Prince Stcherbatoff, an accomplished gentleman, whose intellectual leanings and quick and sound comprehension of the requirements of his country assure him quite an exceptional place. He is the scion of an old aristocratic house, is clever and cultured, and through his long sojourns abroad has been able to appreciate the advantages, and also notice the errors, into which a Constitutional government may fall. The political opinions of Prince Stcherbatoff are sound, and he is a sincere admirer of British civilisation and liberty. Having lived

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a good deal in rural districts of Russia, he understands the nature of the Russian peasant most thoroughly, knows what can be expected and what cannot be required from him, and will be, perhaps, the first Minister of the Interior who will have seen Russia otherwise than from the bureaucratic point of view. This fact gives him a considerable superiority over his predecessors.

Side by side with him there is Count Paul Ignatieff, the distinguished son of most distinguished parents, who in the question of public instruction will bring the sound ideas of a man to whom none of the refinements of the West are unknown, and who understands that it is not sufficient to instruct a nation, but that one must also educate it and bring it to a true appreciation of its duties in regard to the State and to itself.

The choice of these two distinguished personages was entirely due to the action of the Emperor, from which we must conclude that those who say that Nicholas II. has no initiative talk about what they do not understand, because if there is one quality which the Tsar most certainly possesses, it is a soundness of judgment in the choice of his friends and collaborators.

I think that so far I have given to my readers a short sketch of the principal people upon whose efforts the conduct of the State affairs of Russia will depend for the next ten years or so. Among them are some who, should a revolution break out, will have to disappear from the political scene, whilst others will most likely come into stronger prominence: and, indeed, the future

Count Benckendorff

may also bring forward men as yet unknown, but one can safely assume that it will be among the statesmen I have mentioned that the Emperor will seek the people on whose efforts he will have to rely to restore order in his Empire after the war is over.

The Russian Ambassador in London, Count Benckendorff, and M. Izvolsky, the Ambassador in France, will, of course, be called upon to take part in the deliberations of an eventual congress. Count Benckendorff is essentially a gentleman, an ideal upholder of the great traditions of the Russian Foreign Office. He is a shrewd, keen politician, one who never loses his head, no matter to what kind of provocation he may be subjected, very English in his tastes and in his personal appearance, speaking the language perfectly, and understanding better, perhaps, than any other man in Russia the English character and the great part played by Britain in the onward march of civilisation. Count Benckendorff is essentially a moderate man; he will never allow his personal feelings to sway him when looking into the facts of a case, and he will take good care not to lose the impartiality of his judgment in matters where the welfare of his country will be concerned.

During the moments that preceded the war, when the Austrian ultimatum was staggering the public by its insolence, Count Benckendorff was perhaps the only man who did not underrate the situation, and Sir Edward Grey must have found him a valuable help during the anxious days when both Russian and English diplomacy

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tried their best to avoid the impending catastrophe. His place is quite certain among the men whose duty it will be to oblige Prussian diplomacy to submit to conditions capable of assuring lasting peace to Europe.

M. Izvolsky is different by nature from the Count. He is anything but a quiet man—and quietness is the quality which will be required more than any other when the diplomacy of the world shall meet. He has always seemed to me to possess a positive genius for inventing difficulties where no one else would have seen any, and is credited with enjoying intrigue. He is one of the most intelligent men the Russian Foreign Office possesses; his skill in writing a dispatch is something quite wonderful, and his knowledge of all the “finesses” of the French language invaluable. He is fond of unravelling situations which, with the exception of himself, no other person would be daring enough to attempt to clear; and has, if an exaggerated idea of his personal importance, at least no mean one concerning his country’s greatness.

A long diplomatic experience of men and of politics has not softened M. Izvolsky’s impetuosity of character, which makes him embarrassing at times. If he could be made to work in the background, without coming forward in any capacity save that of one of the best linguists which Europe possesses, then certainly he would render invaluable service; but this is hardly to be expected. M. Izvolsky might well prove the *enfant terrible* of the congress.

I venture to put forward the opinion that in one



M. J. L. GOREMYKIN



SIGNOR A. SALANDRA

A Settlement by Kings

respect at least the peace congress, when it comes, will be totally different from any which has preceded it. It will not remain confined to the decisions of politicians; Royalty will assert itself. The Sovereigns who, together with their subjects, have borne the brunt of the battle, and have identified themselves with the cause of the countries over which they rule, will certainly express their desires and opinions and defend the interests of their peoples. They will perforce come into personal intercourse with each other, and from their joint action great results can be expected. In difficult situations there is nothing like King to King conversations.

In the better and happier world which we all expect to see when things have settled down after the war the prestige of Royalty will most certainly recover some of its lost ground, owing to the spirit of self-sacrifice displayed by Kings and Princes. The influence of Monarchs in this historical moment will prove far more beneficial than the cleverness of the cleverest Minister. Whatever comes to be settled in the matter of that future peace, it is certain that heavy sacrifices will have to be made by one side as well as by the other.

These sacrifices, before they are finally accepted, will have to obtain a higher sanction than that of a Ministerial signature. I hope I may be forgiven for saying that I feel proud to think that it is the combined effort of my Emperor and of his Royal Cousin of England that more than anything else will at last bring rest to a weary world.

II

FRANCE

IT is related that when Prince Bismarck was told of the death of M. Thiers he exclaimed that France had lost its last statesman. Indeed, it had long been a tradition in Germany that France was no more than a nation of politicians, who thought only of the interests of the different parties to which they belonged whilst troubling little about the welfare of the country in general. German diplomats despised French statesmen, and though they might and ought to have known better, they remained imbued with the idea of the inferiority of France, not only in military matters, but also politically.

This strange delusion was certainly one of the factors which brought about the present war, and it illustrates the utter want of foresight and of judgment which prevailed in German official circles in regard to what was going on abroad. In spite of their wonderfully organised spy system, they remained either in ignorance or supercilious indifference of the steadfast manner in which France had been adding to her military strength and efficiency. They had failed to grasp the French character, which, frivolous in appearance, yet has an abundant endowment of perseverance, and which is apt

German Delusions

on occasion to rise to a higher degree of patriotism than is known in almost any other nation, England excepted.

Right up to the days immediately before the war the Teuton still believed that France was a land of amusement and Paris a city of pleasure, where the inhabitants preferred the enjoyment of the passing moment to any serious occupation. They flouted any suggestion that the Republic could consolidate itself on French soil, and treated Republican institutions with disdain, being convinced that in the long run they could only prove a source of disunion to the country. The alliance with Russia was particularly displeasing to Germany, not because they had feared France could help Russia, but rather because they did not wish Russia to come to the help of France. In that lay the salient miscalculation of Germany.

The fact was that after the war of 1870 the Germans had ignored France from the height of the superiority which they imagined themselves to possess over her. To this was added a preconceived opinion that no Frenchman could put his patriotism above his party. In short, German Ministers did not think it worth the trouble to cultivate French friendship. The German military attachés, who took such care and trouble to find out the secrets of Russian armaments, never quite believed that by any possibility the French could raise *their* armaments to any degree of formidability. The prevailing feeling which existed in the German War Office was one of irritation that such a despicable enemy

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as they thought the French to be could at the same time become so audacious as to show its teeth to the colossus by whom it had once been defeated.

It was only when German diplomacy began to realise that in M. Deleassé was an opponent who was not to be despised that the Wilhelmstrasse showed some anxiety. But still it would probably have returned to the happy unconcern with which it had always treated the many administrations that had succeeded each other on the banks of the Seine had not King Edward VII. worked toward the establishment of an understanding between Britain, France and Russia sufficiently powerful to keep in check the Triple Alliance, about the solidarity of which no one at the time ventured to cast any doubt.

This displeased the ruling oracles in Berlin. It displeased Kaiser William II. even more, perhaps, because the latter instinctively felt that the antipathy which he inspired personally in his Royal Uncle had something to do with the latter's political schemes. At all events, it was dating from this period that the German Government began seriously to think of the possibility of another war with France. With an aberration of mind which it is most difficult to explain, it never gave a thought to the contingency that such a war would mean another conflict with Russia, and most likely one with England.

The last probability, in particular, never crossed any German brain. Great Britain, they believed, was far too selfish a nation ever to risk the bones of its soldiers in the cause of an ally. As for Russia, because she was

Prince Radolin

supposed to stand always on the brink of a revolution of some kind, Germany was fully satisfied that her defeat would present no considerable difficulty. Another curious symptom in the relations between France and Germany during the last ten years or so was the care that the latter country took to establish social relations with the former, without giving any serious thought to cultivating a better political understanding. All the Ambassadors who were sent to Paris were told to cultivate the good graces of its fashionable set, but were never advised to frequent the Republican salons, where they could have had the opportunity of meeting the members of the Government apart from official intercourse. Prince Radolin, in fact, who was for something like ten years in possession of the German Embassy in France, had been chosen because he was married to a lady who was half French, and who, through her mother, had numerous relatives in the Faubourg St. Germain and among the old French aristocracy.

That Germany treated the Republic as quite a negligible quantity was, perhaps, the best thing that could have happened for our Ally. France could, therefore, develop herself undisturbed and perfect, without hindrance, the reorganisation of her army, her finance, her industry, and all the other material matters which stood in need of strengthening. The Republic had gradually established itself in the country, and established most strongly, in spite of the great differences which divided it. After the reverses of 1870 the nation had

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realised that, whatever it might think individually, there was one point upon which it ought to be united, and that was in its love for its native soil. France had become the first thought of every man and woman.

As years went on the chances of the various pretenders to Monarchical rule became more and more slender, until at last they dwindled down to nothing. The old partisans died; their children resolutely gave their adhesion to the Republic. Compulsory military service did more than anything else to obliterate old memories and to draw together all the classes of the nation, until gradually the whole of France became saturated with democratic ideas.

As this transformation took place new men came forward; a young, energetic generation stepped into the arena, and began to make its influence felt everywhere. It was a studious generation, too, and it had done something more than learn history in school; it had associated itself with the people—the middle classes in most cases, and the lower ones in some—and thus had learned to know France as she really was. The ambition of these men was to lead France toward prosperity, to restore somewhat of her past glories, and who, whilst not frequenting the houses of the upper ten, prepared themselves in the silence of their studies for the day when they would stand side by side with these same upper ten in order to wipe off the memory of Sedan and of all the sad events which had followed upon that great disaster.

These men, nor the mould of their character, did

France Reveals her Strength

not enter into the calculations of German statesmen or German diplomats, who proved themselves, indeed, to be, if not absolutely incapable, at least deficient in that spirit of observation which ought to have been their first care. Had such a faculty been properly exercised, it would have revealed to them a France absolutely different from the one which they pictured : a France both earnest and courageous, determined to do her duty, and to do it well ; full of energy, of patriotism, of devotion to the great cause which she meant to defend ; relying not on others, but on herself, and trusting more to her spirit of self-sacrifice than to all the alliances which she might eventually make. That such a France existed was not suspected in Berlin ; it was hardly known to many Frenchmen themselves, and she was to reveal her strength in the hour of peril with an energy which proved that she had never ceased to be a great nation.

French statesmen, too, showed themselves to be worthy descendants of the clever men who had upheld in the past the prestige of French diplomacy. They might not, perhaps, have been as polished as the *seigneurs* who had formerly presided over the Foreign Office, but they were strong men, clever men, men of action, who did not waste their time in trying to parry difficulties which did not exist, who paid no attention to trifles, but who seldom allowed anything to escape them out of which might have arisen a danger of some kind to their country.

M. Delcassé, for instance, is a type of a great

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Minister, and, though the age of Richelieu and Mazarin is past, he can still live in history as a man who, earlier than others, guessed the danger which threatened Europe. The personality of M. Delcassé has been very much discussed. He has been accused of strong anti-German feelings; and perhaps in a certain sense this accusation was deserved. Yet I do not think that he would have done anything to hasten the hour of a struggle which he, for one, guessed would be inevitable in the long run. He certainly did all that he could to win allies for France, and he undoubtedly worked toward securing the sympathy and the support of the Russian Press during his stay in Petrograd, whither he had gone as Ambassador with considerable reluctance. He never felt happy far from his beloved Paris, and, further, he was a man who required to have his energies sustained by the excitement of parliamentary debates and parliamentary criticism, in which he was in his element.

M. Delcassé has a strong character: he could carry through to its end any plan he had set himself to follow out. He has considerable self-assertion and no lack of masterfulness, in the sense that where he met with opposition he never hesitated to destroy his adversaries when he could not convince them. He understood admirably the difficult art of handling humanity, but he was not the intriguing individual the German Press has represented him to be. Indeed, he was far too violent to be able to indulge in intrigue; and, besides, had not nearly sufficient patience or subtlety to play

M. Delcassé

that game with advantage to himself or to his country. He would never have been able to wait long and patiently for something he had made up his mind to get, and he would rather have broken windows than have asked someone to come and open them for him. When he was a member of the Cabinet he tried to carry through his naval programme against all advice to the contrary, and when he was an Ambassador in Petrograd he persuaded those with whom he was brought into contact to accept his opinions, and to back him in his determination to check German advance in the domains of industry and commerce with a strenuous thoroughness that was apt to overlook the fact that by doing so Russia might be endangering her own interests.

And yet this man, who, as some of his friends declared, could never resign himself to a passive attitude no matter how important it might be for him to do so, has given a rare example of self-control since he joined the Viviani Ministry. He, who was so fond of speaking and of putting himself forward, has effaced himself, and applied all his energies to the administration of the department of which he has control. M. Delcassé has sacrificed his individuality with a truly grand abnegation, and has allowed himself to become entirely absorbed in the Cabinet of which he is a member. He has worked for France, and, whilst never forgetting that he is her servant, has never asked her to remember that such was the case or to offer him any reward for his efforts on her behalf.

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When peace will have to be discussed there is no doubt but that M. Delcassé will be one of those who will have to defend the interests of his country on that occasion. His diplomatic experience, combined with his knowledge of humanity, will make him a powerful advocate. More so because he will know how to keep in check his natural impetuosity, and will never again allow himself to be carried away by his personal feelings, affections or aversions. Despite his fiery disposition, he has learned a splendid self-control, and it is safe to prophesy that he will not even let his indignation burst forth, but will show himself throughout courteous, polite, conciliating even, but—inflexible as Fate.

If M. Delcassé is a great Frenchman, M. Viviani is a great patriot, which is not quite the same thing. The entrance into the Radical Cabinet of this formerly Socialist lawyer created a scandal even among Republican circles in Paris society. Everybody had heard about M. Viviani, but no one knew him, when he suddenly accepted office, and everybody declared that it was a shame to allow such an outsider to rule in France. Naturally, being almost unknown, he was supposed to be an Anarchist, if not something worse; he certainly was not suspected of being a clever man, capable of adapting himself to circumstances and of learning from others concerning matters which had not been taught him by his early masters. His education had been entirely self-acquired, and he had such a keen sense of what was required of him that he quickly made up for the

M. Viviani

deficiencies of his training and adapted himself to his new position.

I remember an amusing conversation about him which took place in the house of a lady (Madame de Caillavet) who enjoyed a considerable reputation for cleverness in Paris, where, so long as she lived, her *salon* was the meeting-place of all that was considered intellectual in France. It was about a month or two after M. Viviani had become a Minister, and a man—whose name I refrain from mentioning for obvious reasons, but who was not supposed to like M. Viviani, having had the opportunity to meet him at the house of an Ambassador where they had both been guests at a dinner—was asked by the hostess to tell her what he thought of him. “I think that he will go far,” was the reply. “Why?” inquired Madame de Caillavet. “Because the first time I saw him he was still eating with his knife, whilst yesterday he did not even attempt to do so with his fish-knife,” was the unexpected reply which delighted all in the room.

This paradox had a deep meaning. M. Viviani's great merit has been to adapt himself not to circumstances, as so many people merely do, but to the customs of good society and to the traditions of diplomatic and ministerial existence. Even when quite unaccustomed to the duties of his office he hardly ever made a mistake, and, fully conscious of the deficiencies which he owed to a youth spent in quite different surroundings, he at once grasped that it would not do to affect Republican

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manners and Republican disdain for conventionalities when talking with people who, nine times out of ten, paid more attention to outward trifles than to the real worth of a man. Moreover, M. Viviani was a great patriot, and he would not have cared to see France disparaged in his person. He wanted to appear irreproachable in his manners and in his appearance for her sake, and he had shown of what stuff he was made when he applied himself not to allow the choice she had made of him to be either laughed at or discussed from the ridiculous point of view.

When M. Viviani arrived in Petrograd last summer with M. Poincaré he impressed most favourably all those who saw him, and who, after having expected to find an uncouth, unwashed, unshaven man, were pleasantly surprised to see that they had to deal with a gentleman of excellent manners, who made a charming companion, and was a politician of uncommon acumen, gifted with sufficient tact not to air opinions that might have clashed with those of the people whose guest he happened to be. He soon became a favourite, and those who had hoped to see France laughed at in his person were disappointed. M. Viviani proved to be more than a match for his detractors.

He is, perhaps, one of the best politicians France has possessed for a long time. Not so brilliant as M. Delcassé, he is nevertheless a good orator, capable sometimes of rising to real eloquence, and he has broad views which on occasion attain to grandeur. Not a

M. Jules Cambon

refined man, he possesses that unerring instinct of primitive natures which makes them guess danger where others do not suspect it to lurk. He is quick in his decisions once he has made up his mind, but he is slow in coming to a decision, weighing with unusual prudence the pros and cons of every situation. Not so violent as M. Delcassé, he sometimes sees more quickly than his colleague the consequences of a political line of action, as well as the interpretation which the man in the street can eventually put on it; and, being himself a child of the people, he realises better than an aristocrat would what will be the opinions of the people on one subject or on another, and he is, therefore, able more acutely than any other man in France, perhaps, to interpret her feelings on the day when she will begin to square accounts with her enemies. M. Viviani is not likely to consent to represent his country at the peace congress, but most certainly he will be able to guide his colleagues who will do so, because he will intuitively know what the nation will be ready to sanction or not.

Should M. Delcassé have to stand for the rights of France during the peace negotiations, it would surprise no one were he to ask M. Jules Cambon, who for so many years was French Ambassador in Berlin, to help him in his task. M. Cambon is one of the best diplomats of whom France can boast.

It is due to the efforts of M. Cambon that Franco-German relations assumed such a courteous form during the years previous to the war. He worked conscientiously

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at a *rapprochement* between his country and the one to which he was accredited, but at the same time he was not simple enough to believe implicitly in the protestations which were made to him upon the subject by the German Foreign Office, and even by the Emperor William II. himself, with whom M. Cambon was a favourite.

M. Cambon, with his quiet manners, was a wonderful observer, and he had noted, as his secret reports to his Government—if ever they are published in their entirety—will prove, a variety of small symptoms that had given him a good deal to think about. He had seen the military preparations of Prussia, and, though assured to the contrary, had never doubted but that they were directed against his country. At the same time he always hoped that the catastrophe which he foresaw might yet be avoided, and had tried to dissipate as far as possible the supposed apprehensions which, as the German Government declared to him, the close relations existing between the Paris and the Petrograd Cabinets inspired in Berlin. He had done his best to prove that no change had taken place in those relations, and that France harboured no sinister designs against other countries. And when Herr von Jagow expressed to M. Cambon the opinion that the projected journey of M. Poincaré to Russia constituted a threat to Germany, M. Cambon used all his eloquence to explain to the Prussian Secretary of State that this trip was nothing else than a mere visit of courtesy, such as had become traditional for every

Rushing into War

President of the French Republic to make after his election, ever since the time when M. Faure originated the custom. He added that in the case of M. Poincaré it had not even been followed in its former details, because the latter had begun his wanderings abroad by going to London instead of showing himself first in Petrograd as his predecessors had done. Herr von Jagow sighed, but answered not a word, yet he allowed M. Cambon to guess that this explanation had not removed the bad impression which prevailed in the Wilhelmstrasse as well as in Potsdam.

During the days that followed upon the Austrian ultimatum to Servia the position of M. Cambon was a most painful one, but he bravely stopped at his post to the last moment, and, together with Sir Edward Goschen and their Russian colleague, he worked unceasingly toward the solution of the artificial differences which, thanks to the encouragements received from Berlin, had arisen between Vienna and Belgrade. The Russian Orange Book and the other official documents published in London and in Paris prove that, so far as the French Government is concerned, it did not do a single thing which could have been construed in the sense of a provocation addressed either to Austria or to Germany. Not only it did not rush into a war, but on the contrary it bore with the utmost patience and dignity accusations and reproaches which were not only devoid of common sense, but simply launched at its head in order to exasperate it into doing or saying something which

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Germany could have interpreted as an affront for which the only redress could be a call to arms.

M. Cambon saw through that game, and made up his mind not to accept the challenge which his adversaries wanted him to take up. He was of opinion that in the conflict which was going to begin France ought to place herself in the position of the attacked party, and not to fall into the mistake her politicians had made in 1870, when she had fallen into the snare set before her by Prince von Bismarck, and had declared war to Prussia as foolishly as uselessly. He meant to establish before the whole world, and before history later on, that France had been attacked, and attacked shamelessly and unscrupulously, at the very time when she had been doing all that she could do in order to save Europe the horrors of the most terribly devastating war it had ever seen.

When the true history of the war comes to be written one of the facts that will strike most of its readers will be the dignified attitude which the French Government, and indeed the whole of France, contrived to maintain during the trying days that preceded the declaration of war.

The Parisian population, which was supposed always to be ready to plunge into excesses, did not allow itself the slightest manifestation against the German Ambassador nor any of his numerous compatriots, with whom, as usual every summer, the capital was quite full. Baron von Schoen was offered a special train on his departure ;

A Sacred Idea of Duty

and whilst poor M. Cambon had to submit to any number of annoyances before he was allowed to leave Berlin, the representative of the Emperor William II. started on his journey in state, and was given every facility to rejoin his Sovereign.

The truth of the matter was that France, whom her enemies had believed to be so careless and so light hearted, had understood, from the first moment that the text of Austria's ultimatum to Servia had become known to the general public, that she was standing on the threshold of a new and most important chapter of her history, and that she was going to pass through a crisis of unusual magnitude. This crisis she determined to meet earnestly, seriously, without bragging of any kind, and with the consciousness that, since it could not be avoided, it must be lived through and surmounted at any cost. She did not want to dishonour the misfortune that had befallen her by any unruly actions or by excesses which would be a reproach to her later on, and so she bravely set her back to the wall, and awaited the fate to which events had doomed her with a quiet courage. The cry of "*À Berlin, à Berlin!*" which had resounded day and night in the Paris streets in 1870 was not heard in 1914. No one even gave a thought to the possibility of getting there, and the only eventuality one was looking forward to was that of bravely defending oneself, without any other aim than that of doing one's duty. This sacred idea of duty animated the citizens of France during that month of August, 1914; the nation

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rose as one man to show her enemies that she had made up her mind not to be defeated a second time.

M. Cambon at this critical period proved himself a worthy representative of his beloved land. To the insinuations and reproaches of Herr von Jagow he opposed simply a polite indifference, against which all the German's efforts broke down. M. Cambon did not defend the policy of the Government which he represented; he simply defended France against unjust and false accusations, and he did so in a courteous, gentleman-like manner that left to the German Secretary of State no loophole for escape. So long as he could reasonably hope for a peaceful solution of the crisis, M. Jules Cambon worked for its attainment; but when the gauntlet was at last thrown violently into the face of Russia, then he gave the powers that ruled at the Wilhelmstrasse distinctly to understand that France was not going to abandon her ally, and that whatever happened to the latter would be considered as a provocation and an insult addressed also to France. At the close of his ambassadorial career in Germany, M. Cambon proved himself to be a first-class politician, as well as a diplomat of the highest order. During his long stay in Berlin he had studied the Prussian character, and if France was not quite so well prepared for the war as she had been led to believe was the case, it was certainly not the fault of M. Cambon, who had done his best to open the eyes of his Government to the imminence of a rupture with her Eastern neighbour. He had never believed in the

Indifference of Herr von Jagow

protestation which at one time Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg had made to him in regard to the pacific designs of Germany. His clear outlook and his diplomatic experience had made him realise all that lurked behind the apparent frankness.

M. Cambon was perfectly well aware of the different subterfuges resorted to by an opponent whose unscrupulousness equalled his arrogance. He applied all his efforts to induce Herr von Jagow to accept the offer of a conference made by Sir Edward Grey.

As we all know, the efforts of the French Ambassador in those later days of July, 1914, came to nothing in the face of the attitude of indifference assumed by the German Secretary of State, Herr von Jagow, who was acting according to orders received from the Emperor and confirmed by the General Staff. Rightly or wrongly, the military party in Berlin was convinced that it would emerge with new laurels from the war which it intended to provoke, and every diplomatic action, therefore, was bound to break down before the preconceived determination at which the rulers of Germany had arrived.

It is, nevertheless, to be questioned whether anyone except M. Cambon would have been able to prevent the explosion of the catastrophe as long as he succeeded in doing, and it is impossible to admire sufficiently the ability which he displayed in those trying moments, when he never allowed himself to be carried away by the just indignation he must have experienced, but, with an inflexible determination, always kept Herr von Jagow

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to the point under discussion. M. Cambon showed himself worthy of France, just as much as France, in this decisive crisis in her national existence, deserved to see her interests defended by a man so well aware of the importance for her future reputation and for her place in history it was that his country should emerge with untarnished honour from the snare into which her traditional enemy had tried to entangle her.

M. Jules Cambon's brother Paul is equally clever and just as alive to the dangers and necessities of the hour as Jules. He represents his country at the Court of St. James's. M. Paul Cambon will also, most probably, have a word to say when peace comes to be discussed. France, indeed, has had rare luck in her choice of ambassadors. M. Barrère, for instance, in Rome, revealed himself to the world as a man of unusual ability. In the duel of diplomacy which he found himself called upon to fight with Prince von Bülow, and which did not turn out to the advantage of the German statesman, M. Barrère displayed quite wonderful skill, and contrived to win over to his side those in Italy who were still hesitating. The Latin sympathies of the subjects of Victor Emmanuel won the day, but it is still a question whether this would have happened so quickly had not M. Barrère succeeded in interesting the Italian Press in the cause of the Triple Understanding and in persuading it to stir the Italian nation to a conviction that she would commit a crime against all her past traditions were she to forget her old animosities against Austria, and to side with the enemies

More German Intrigues

of France, to whose efforts on her behalf she owed her liberation from the Austrian yoke.

Although the Teuton steadily refused to believe it, the statesmen in whose hands rested the destinies of France were far and away superior to those of Germany. In the presence of a diplomat like M. Cambon both the Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg and his aide-de-camp Von Jagow cut rather a sorry figure. The latter, by their conduct all through the crisis, made themselves odious where they did not appear ridiculous, while the leaders of French politics proved to the world that the best traditions of the Duc de Talleyrand and of the Duc Decazes were not forgotten at the Quai d'Orsay.

Later on the world will learn that just before and immediately after the Austrian ultimatum had been sent to Servia, Germany attempted to enter into closer relations with France and to win her by vague promises, which evidently were uttered either to mislead the French Government as to her real intentions, or else to make France appear in a false light before her Allies. Only very few of the inner circle of statesmen know the precise facts, but there are documents to prove to the hilt that Germany tried to sow dissension between Petrograd and Paris; and if she did not succeed in this diabolical plan it was only because her diplomacy was conducted in the crude and coarse way that appeals to the German mind—and to no one else.

There was one personality in Paris, M. Poincaré, whose very name was hated in Germany with an impetuosity

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which was akin to the ferocious. From the very first day of his election to the Presidency of the Republic he had become the bugbear of the German Press, as well as of the German public. Whilst M. Loubet and M. Fallières had been spoken of with a certain courtesy—which, if not entirely respectful, at least could be interpreted in that sense—their successor became the pet abomination of Prussia. M. Poincaré was credited not only with bellicose intentions, but also with the most Machiavellian designs in regard to the whole of Europe. Some organs of the German Press had even gone so far as to accuse him of wishing to change his title of President into that of King, and of founding the dynasty of the Poincarés, a flight of imagination which was the more delightful as M. Poincaré has no children.

A lady living in Berlin, who was *au fait* with all that was going on, was writing to me on that subject at the time when the French President was about to pay his famous visit to Petrograd which provoked so much anger in Berlin, and she added that it was an open secret there that the Wilhelmstrasse intended not only to follow all the incidents of the visit with great attention, but also was determined to seize hold of the smallest excuse to provoke a conflict, either with France or with Russia. The Wilhelmstrasse felt afraid of M. Poincaré's activity, and circulated in quarters where they would spread hints of the President's dark designs in regard to the peace of the world, although, in reality, he was far from being the great Chauvinist his enemies liked to represent him.



M. RAYMOND POINCARE
President of the French Republic

M. Poincaré

M. Poincaré, however, was not the man to fall into any snare, and he was also wonderfully well informed as to all that was going on at Berlin. He did not wish for war, and was far too good a patriot to care to see his country entangled in conflict. He loyally stood by the side of his Ministers throughout the trying days when there was still some hope of avoiding the general conflagration of Europe, and he certainly never encouraged them to do aught else than persevere in a most conciliating attitude, whilst keeping true to the engagements with her Allies, Russia and England, into which France had entered.

It is to the eternal honour of Republican France that she proved to the world that her diplomats, though belonging to the middle classes, could maintain the same high sense of honour and dignity which characterised her Ministers and her ambassadors in early days when the statesmen of France belonged to her oldest aristocracy. Since 1870 a good deal has been done in the way of a total transformation of social scenes in France, and not the least among these transformations has been the quick manner in which young men born among the *bourgeoisie* have assimilated themselves with those whose earlier associations had been connected with the palaces of kings and the intimacy of sovereigns. Even the famous Jaurès himself, who was supposed to be the leader of all the Socialist and Anarchist circles of his country, could boast of the manners of a gentleman, and certainly possessed the instincts of a true statesman.

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Talking of M. Jaurès reminds me of M. Clemenceau, who is the incarnation of French wit allied to French solid qualities. M. Clemenceau is one of the most original individualities of his time. For many years he destroyed by the sheer force of his inimitable sarcasms almost every Government he chose to attack—and hardly one of them, during the last twenty-five years, found grace in his eyes. When M. Clemenceau himself became the leader of a Government, he did not cease the criticisms which, all through his political life, he had enjoyed levelling at his colleagues and at the different Cabinets which he had helped to make or to unmake.

Since the war began M. Clemenceau has continued criticising the Government, together with all that the latter had thought it useful to do in view of the national defence. After his paper, *L'Homme Libre*, had been repeatedly suppressed by the Censor, he changed its name to *L'Homme Enchaîné*, and continued most cleverly and wittily to draw the attention of the public to all that he thought worthy of the scathing irony of which he is a past master. If, however, one cares to study a little attentively the clever, sarcastic articles he writes with that *entrain* and that careful attention which he devotes to all products of his pen, one will find that at the bottom of the ridicule which he showers upon the people and the things which displease him there lurks a deep patriotic feeling and the passionate desire to be useful to his country. He knows very well that with French people the proverb that it is only ridicule which

M. Clemenceau

kills is an exact description of the different impressions that move the crowds and make them appreciate the real worth of this or that thing. Whilst he hastens to laugh at the mistakes committed by his neighbour, it is only because he does not care to cry at them, to quote the words of Beaumarchais in the *Figaro*.

M. Clemenceau is far too thorough a politician to indulge in tears, and, besides, is fully aware that the future in France belongs to men of action, and to them alone. Gifted with singular perspicacity and unusual shrewdness, he realises that the only means to keep the attention of his compatriots riveted on the extreme earnestness of the present situation is to talk to them continually about it, and to induce them, whilst discussing the asides of a great drama, to interest themselves in its great issues constantly and without interruption. Fully conscious that his country stands in peril, he works in his own way at her salvation by never allowing her to forget that such is the case.

With all his brilliant qualities, and perhaps on account of them, M. Clemenceau would never have made a good diplomat. He could not have resisted the temptation to make a witty remark about the very people he ought to have propitiated, and he could not have understood the art of keeping silent at times. But, for all that, he is a statesman, with the temperament of a statesman, and with all the broadness of view indispensable when one wants to play a prominent part in the conduct of the affairs of the world in general and of one's own country

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in particular. When the question of peace arises, his quick grasp of the consequences of every resolution will prove of immense use, and, even if he is not among the delegates, he will be able to give them some sound advice, and at the same time to stimulate their energies, should these show a tendency to fail. M. Clemenceau is not only a statesman; he is also the inspiring genius of other statesmen.

In speaking of French statesmen I must not pass by M. Briand, who, though he has not made himself talked about as much as was the case at the beginning of his career, may be called to take a part in the work of the future congress. He is a wonderful example of a self-made man. Intelligent to an uncommon degree, he has risen step by step in the hierarchy of Society, and, having passed through all its degrees, has acquired a perfect knowledge of its weaknesses, meannesses, and also of its various intrigues. M. Briand understands to perfection the art of leading the masses and of securing their friendship and support, while at the same time he despises them. Having begun life as a workman, he has learnt how to speak with workmen, how to appeal to their feelings as well as to their instincts, and especially how to make them realise their own strength. He is cutting and even callous at times, but not often unjust. Being a fair-minded man, he resented deeply certain dark accusations which were made against him at a time when self-defence was impossible for reasons which could not then be revealed. Indeed, it is said that, even though

M. Briand

he has high ambitions, he accepted a seat in the Cabinet less from ambition than because it afforded him the opportunity of meeting his enemies and crushing the cruel lies that were told about him.

M. Briand has given proofs of his belief in his own capability when the right moment should come by the modesty with which he has taken a seat in the background. It was thought at one time that he would only accept a place in the front row of the theatre where the great *Comédie Humaine* is played, but M. Briand is quite content to wait his time, certain, as he must feel, that his hour will come yet. He has by no means exhausted his capacity as a leader of men, and so far he has not compromised himself with any party. He is not a man of the past, hardly yet a man of the future, and he disdains to be a man of the present.

M. Briand knows the golden value of silence and self-restraint, but he is decidedly not a weak man; he is ambitious, too, and this to an uncommon degree. He aspires to wield a dominating influence on his generation, and, in truth, he has more chance of becoming head of the State after M. Poincaré than any other statesman in his country. His only serious rival as a possible President of the Republic would be a victorious general to whose successes the nation would owe the conclusion of an honourable peace with Germany.

General Joffre has a strong though simple individuality. Up to last year he was almost unknown to the general public, who, though it knew he had been selected

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for the post of *Generalissimo* in case of a foreign war, did not attach more importance to him than to any other general. At first, when the Germans tried that march on Paris in the summer of 1914, Joffre found many detractors who declared that he understood nothing about military matters and science, and that, had he really tried, he could have stopped the invading armies of the enemy at the frontier. When the battle of the Marne had obliged General von Kluck to retreat, Joffre became a popular hero; then his enemies murmured he was far too slow in all his movements. His reputation has shared quite a barometric variation, fluctuating between good and bad weather with a mobility which would have shattered the nerves of any other man than himself. He bore with criticism, was never elated by praise, and he has gone his way slowly and quietly; but it is to be questioned whether anyone but himself is aware of his ultimate intentions.

When all the details of the diplomatic negotiations which preceded the declaration of war by Germany are recalled, a strong admiration is felt for the moderation of the French Government, against which stands out in vivid contrast the forgetfulness of the most elementary principles of diplomacy which, from the beginning to the very end of the crisis, signalised the conduct of the Berlin Cabinet. The world is now familiar with an abundance of examples of Germany's obtuseness in this way, an obtuseness which, were it not for the tragedy involved, became amusing at times. There was a distinct spice of

Tortuous Diplomacy

humour in the assumed guilelessness with which—after the war had been going on for some time—Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg made his vain endeavour to explain the unexplainable by reproaching France for not having exercised a moderating influence at Petrograd, where, according to the point of view the Chancellor then adopted, she could have induced Russia to give up her intention to stand by Servia. It raises a laugh, though a sad one, to think that Germany, who all the while had been entreated by England, Italy and France to persuade Austria to show herself moderate in regard to Servia, had bluntly refused to do anything of the kind. If ever there arose a question of two weights and two measures, it was during those days when the Berlin Cabinet insisted on others performing duties of honour it had refused to do on its own account.

The successive stages of the diplomatic course which ended in the outbreak of hostilities furnish many a proof not only of German shiftiness but also of the honourable conduct of France. The details have been given to the public in Blue Books, Yellow Books and books of all the colours of the rainbow, but I have seen nowhere the following incident of those memorable days.

I must ask the indulgence of taking no responsibility for the incident, but it reached me from a source I have good reason to trust. It seems that when the German ultimatum was sent to Russia a great friend of the German Chancellor called upon him to discuss the situation, the extreme seriousness of which did not seem to

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strike Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg as it ought to have done. The gentleman in question, who had lived many years in Russia and who knew the country well, tried to explain to the Minister that it would not be such an easy matter to get the upper hand in a war with Russia, as both the people and the army had vastly improved since the war with Japan. "You will find that you have to do with a formidable adversary, who will not yield one inch of ground without making you pay most heavily for it," he said; "and you must not forget that you will have to defend yourself on two fronts, and that France, if not better organised than Russia is nowadays, is at least her equal. Are you sure it will be possible for you to carry on war with the whole of Europe, for this is practically what will happen? England will not remain indifferent to the fate of her neighbour across the Channel, and, as for Italy, it is an open question whether she will keep true to her engagements."

"But suppose that all you tell me is true," replied Bethmann-Hollweg, "what would you advise us to do in the present dilemma?"

"What I would propose to do? It is quite simple. I should offer immediately to France—in an official note which I would cause to be published in all the newspapers of the world—to take part in a conference as to the possibility of granting autonomy to Alsace Lorraine. This conference could always be dragged on, and finally would lead to nothing; but the moral effect would have been produced, and in the meanwhile France would not have

What Edward VII. achieved

helped Russia, with whom you would have fought single-handed. No Government would have lived an hour in Paris if it had sided with that of the Tsar and not accepted your offer. You could have done what you liked afterwards, and this bold step would put an end once for all to the Franco-Russian alliance and to all the political coalitions which the cleverness of King Edward VII. brought about."

The German Chancellor sighed, but, though he made no reply to this Machiavellian proposal, it was evident that it impressed him deeply. As was to be expected, the proposal itself remained a dead letter. Bismarck would have understood its deep meaning and appreciated it; Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg, very probably, did not even mention it to the Emperor.

This war has revealed the French character as far more earnest, steady and courageous than one had supposed. Frenchmen, when they saw themselves confronted by a crisis upon which their future existence as a nation depended, forgot even to boast about their patriotism, but simply took up their rifles or volunteered for other work than soldiering if they were past military age. They forgot their personal grievances, the differences of opinions which had divided their political parties; and statesmen, diplomats, generals, private men, delicate women, boys and girls—one and all flew to defend their beloved land in the hour of her peril. If ever a nation deserved to win a war that had been forced upon it, it is the France of the twentieth century.

III

AUSTRIA

FROM the days of Metternich Austria held credit for possessing an unrivalled knowledge of all the ins and outs of diplomacy. Recently, however, she has cut a more than sorry figure in the events that, either directly or indirectly, have led to the present crisis. Her attitude during the Balkan War was hardly less than stupid and unscrupulous, and in the first movements she, more than anyone, was responsible for the universal conflagration of Europe.

The fact is that Austria has lived on the tradition of a past greatness which not even existed, but which had been artificially manufactured at the beginning of the last century by that veteran of diplomacy, Prince Metternich.

The personality of the present Austrian Monarch deserves a few words of description. Francis Joseph was but a youth of eighteen when he found himself called upon to ascend the throne which his half-imbecile uncle, Ferdinand, had been compelled to abdicate. He had been almost entirely brought up by his mother, the Archduchess Sophy, a clever, ambitious, hard woman, who could never resign herself to the loss of an Imperial rank

Archduchess Sophy

to which she had believed, when she married, that she would be raised one day. She had been obliged to give up that hope, and had determined, at least, to rule under the name of her son, whom she succeeded in keeping under her influence up to the day of her own death; and this notwithstanding the beauty, charm, cleverness and general attractiveness of her daughter-in-law, the lovely Empress Elisabeth, who could never get her own way so long as her formidable mother-in-law remained alive.

The Archduchess, in spite of what has been said to the contrary, was never fond of her children, in whom she only saw the means of satisfying her ambitions, but nothing else. She had been very beautiful in her youth, and remembered it still, and perhaps this accounted for the absence of charity which she displayed in all her criticisms of other women. She had been very fond of Prince Metternich, and had especially appreciated his politics, and when the revolution of 1848 forced the Prince to go into exile it was a great source of grief to her. She was most autocratic by temperament, and sympathised with the ultra-conservative principles of the old statesman and with his fear and abomination of everything which savoured, if even from afar, of Liberalism.

When the Hungarian mutiny broke out, she urged her son and his advisers to adopt violent and severe repression, and it was partly at her suggestion that the cry for help, to which the Tsar Nicholas I. responded so generously, was uttered by Francis Joseph.

This dispatch of Russian troops to Hungary was one

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of those mistakes for which there is no excuse from the political point of view. Nicholas I. himself was partly aware of it, but, chivalrous as he was by nature and by temperament, he believed he was performing a duty in rushing to the rescue of a brother Sovereign threatened by rebellious subjects. He never thought that the reward which his descendants would reap for this generous step would be the perfidies which resulted in the great war of 1914.

But the present head of the Habsburg dynasty has been one of the most criticised Monarchs of the last half-century. It has been freely stated that his mental standard is at fault, while others blame his moral outlook ; perhaps he thinks himself above the ordinary rules which govern mankind. Whatever the cause, the fact remains that, rightly or wrongly, his private life and his public career have often been presented in hardly creditable aspects.

Among the incidents which are still remembered by a world not given to charity and always eager for gossip is the attitude of the Emperor Francis Joseph in regard to his accomplished consort, who was so unhappy in her married life with him, and his conduct in regard to his only son, for whose tragic death a great deal of the responsibility is said by some people to be the Emperor's. His relations, too, with other members of his family have been harshly domineering ; such, for instance, as the incident of the unfortunate Crown Princess of Saxony. As head of her house, he ought to have taken her part when she

Royal Family Squabbles

appealed to him. Instead, he deprived her of her title of Archduchess before even it was officially known that she had fled from Dresden. It is sufficient to recall these few incidents to come to the conclusion that Francis Joseph, the chief of the Habsburgs, has not cultivated the virtue of charity with as much assiduity as becomes those who live in glass houses. As for his public career, it would require a volume longer than I would care to write to relate all that could be said of its episodes.

Old as he is, the Emperor is far from being the political nonentity which he is sometimes represented by his subjects. On the contrary, he takes a keen interest in all that goes on in his monarchy, so long as it does not interfere with his personal comfort, his summer vacation at Ischl, and his friendship with Frau Schratt, the clever Vienna actress, who for more years than they would both care to count has been his adviser in all matters, whether private or public.

In spite of his eighty-odd years, he is still ambitious, and, strange as this may seem, he dreams of the day when he will be able to call himself the conqueror of Russia, putting behind him the thought that had she not given timely help in the past he would not be to-day in possession of his throne.

When his only son perished under such tragic circumstances he naturally felt sorry, but it is certain that a source of considerable anxiety ceased to exist, as the strongly divergent political opinions of the Crown Prince had caused a good deal of annoyance to his father.

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The Emperor Francis Joseph had few intellectual tastes, and therefore could hardly be expected to sympathise with his son's temperament or with the artistic instincts of his wife. He was hardly ever seen to take up a book, and when he had read the short reports his Ministers presented to him respecting the affairs of State he believed that he had done his share of brain-work for the day. Sometimes he would take up a newspaper, such as the Vienna *Fremdenblatt*, but this was seldom. He used to get up earlier than the lark, and retire at sundown. He liked to drive in his park, to roam about looking at the deer, and sometimes to exchange a remark with one of his attendants. He was considered to be most tyrannical in his family circle, and he was perfectly aware that none of his relatives cared for him; but he did not mind in the least, seeing that the fact could not influence any of his bodily comforts.

He had little love for his son. He detested his nephew, the late Archduke Francis Ferdinand, whom he reproached with trying to make himself popular at his uncle's expense, and whom he secretly envied for the success which he had achieved among the chauvinistic circles of Vienna Society. The Emperor was very well aware that only a few years ago it was openly said that he had survived himself, and that the Empire required for its leader a younger and more energetic man. These sayings were reported to him by his own small circle of personal friends, among whom the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, and especially his wife—the clever and

Archduke Francis Ferdinand

ambitious Countess Sophy Chotek—were both intensely disliked and even more feared. Francis Joseph was not in the least disturbed, though such gossip angered him, as he considered that so long as he was alive no one had the right to be anything else but intensely pleased.

Though this fact has not, so far as I know, been made public, it was in reality owing to the old Emperor that the Archduke Francis Ferdinand was given the reputation of being a partisan of war, for in fostering the idea Francis Joseph thought he was diminishing the popularity which he believed the Archduke was beginning to enjoy at his expense.

In reality, Francis Ferdinand, far from wishing Austria to go to war, used his best endeavours at the time of the Balkan crisis to prevent her from doing so. A war did not in the least enter into his programme, nor that of his consort. The latter aspired to be recognised one day as Queen of Hungary, in case it should be found quite impossible to become Empress of Austria, and she also wished her children to be given the right to succeed to their father in all his titles and dignities. She was confidently optimistic in her belief that ultimately she could brush aside the renunciations of succession that Francis Ferdinand had already made, but she understood quite well that she could never do so if Austria were defeated in a war, the onus of which would rest on the shoulders of the Archduke, and injure his reputation and authority in the country so fearfully that he could never afterwards run the risk of attempting to raise to his own

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rank the lady whom he had wedded in defiance of the wishes of his family. The influence of the Duchess of Hohenberg was, therefore, directed toward peace in general, and she did all she could to persuade her husband to throw cold water on the clamourings of the military party, which in Vienna was doing its best to induce half the world to begin fighting with the other half.

Had not the Archduke Francis Ferdinand been murdered at Sarajevo, it is likely that Europe would have been at peace to-day. With all his defects, he possessed a good fund of common sense, and not only a high idea of his personal responsibility, but also strong humanitarian feelings. He was a better man than he was given credit for being; he was honest and kind; he loved his country sincerely, earnestly, with the steadfast purpose to work toward its prosperity and welfare. He had less ambition than his aged uncle, and certainly was more scrupulous. At heart he despised Francis Joseph, though in some things he resembled him; for instance, in his bigotry, and in his hatred of Russia and of the dynasty that occupied her throne. The Archduke cherished the idea of forming a union of all the Slav populations of the Balkan Peninsula under the wing of Austria, and so to snatch them away from the sphere of influence of Moscow and of the Slavophil committees. He was more than friendly with King Ferdinand of Bulgaria, whom he hoped to see come forward and boldly claim the succession to the throne of ancient Byzantium. But though he hoped thus to find Russia ousted from her traditional rôle

Emperor *versus* Archduke

of protector of the Greek communities in the Near East, it is yet to be questioned whether he would have made war upon her to further his plans. He disliked adventures, and made no secret of the abhorrence with which they inspired him.

Right up to the last day of Francis Ferdinand's existence he and his uncle, the Emperor, were in conflict with each other; not openly, perhaps, but under cover of the purely official relations which they entertained in regard to one another, very effectively, and they never missed an opportunity to show it to the world. The Archduke kept shrugging his shoulders in a deprecating way whenever anything connected with the old Sovereign was mentioned; and, as for Francis Joseph, he made no secret, before his friends, of his opinion of his nephew, whom he accused of wishing to lead the Austrian Monarchy to its ruin.

Antagonism of this nature, and from such a high source, naturally complexed the difficulties of the Archduke and his Duchess, who already were under a certain measure of ostracism because of their morganatic marriage. Nevertheless, they made friends for themselves and won partisans in those circles which did not compose the ultra-select circle of Viennese Society. New men of progressive principles gathered round the Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife, whilst old politicians tried to win their favour, and soon the Archduke found himself the central figure of a small but powerful party who adopted for its slogan, "*Avanti! Avanti!*" ("For-

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ward! Forward!'), the motto which belonged to the House of Savoy, to which Francis Ferdinand himself was distantly related through his mother, a Princess of the Two Sicilies.

Strangely enough, though personally the Archduke had absolutely no influence on the course of affairs, and though he was never allowed by his uncle to proffer advice upon any important political question, it was the men who belonged to the small set that gathered round him and his accomplished wife who ruled Austria. State Ministers and officials who were responsible for the politics of the country—the whole of official Austria, indeed—sided with the Archduke.

Francis Joseph himself, though secretly desirous of war, did not care to see it published abroad that that was his aim. He therefore declared that he was doing all that he could to persuade the different Balkan States to live at peace with each other, yet all the time he kept secretly fomenting their divisions and setting them at loggerheads. The aged Monarch, who would have felt most disappointed had the Servian incident come to an end without setting fire to the four corners of Europe, spent his days in solemnly declaring that he was doing everything that was possible to eliminate all danger of a war—if, after all, it broke out, it would not be his fault, but that of France and Russia combined.

Some people have wondered whether Francis Joseph was conscious of his acts, and have attributed to senility the erratic manifestations of his strange character. This

Rudolf's Dreadful End

false opinion must not be allowed to remain. The Austrian Monarch is not different to-day from what he was thirty or forty years ago, when, at the time of the Hungarian mutiny, he caused delicate women to be publicly flogged and sent to the scaffold the noblest representatives of the aristocracy of that land.

The Emperor Nicholas I. had befriended and protected him, treated him as a brother, and finally consolidated him on his throne. Less than ten years after that time, on the outbreak of the Crimean War, his conduct reached the extreme limits of indecent ingratitude. Later on, when the Archduke Maximilian had started on that ill-fated expedition to Mexico, his brother Francis Joseph, who might have come to his rescue, allowed matters to drift until the consummation of the tragedy that, under the walls of Queretaro, put an end to so many legitimate ambitions. If all that was told on this occasion can be believed, Francis Joseph—who always saw a rival in his brother because of his greater culture and intelligence—accepted with utter indifference a stroke of fate that destroyed a life which might still have been exceedingly useful.

When his son Rudolf came to his dreadful end he showed just as deep resignation. When his wife fell under an assassin's file he received the news with a melodramatic phrase that was reproduced in all the newspapers of the world, but never thought of starting for Geneva in order to look upon her dead features for the last time. When, at last, his nephew and future successor was killed

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in that small Bosnian town he used the crime as an opportunity to satisfy his long-dormant ambitions, and to precipitate nearly the whole of Europe into a disaster for which there exists no parallel in history. So much for the principal actor in the drama. Posterity shall judge him.

Next to the Emperor stand other figures, the principal of whom has already gone to his rest. Baron (afterwards Count) d'Aehrenthal was certainly a curious type of the self-made man in a country where aristocratic prejudice plays such an important part in everything that takes place, not only in Society, but also in public life. A Hebrew by origin, he spent his life in denying the race which gave him birth. A pupil of the Jesuits, he gave most of his time to the task of winning the support of the Clerical party in Austria, and succeeded in doing so to a certain extent. He was clever, with a tolerable physique, in which, however, the Jewish type was strongly noticeable. He was an accomplished man of the world, a great admirer of the fair sex (which circumstance proved of infinite value to him in his official career), and a very keen observer, though he secured the reputation of never doing anything at the right moment. He looked at nothing so much as his personal success in all that he was called upon to do; he was very quick at perceiving the weaknesses of every person and every situation, and he hastened to appeal to them whenever he believed that this might become profitable to his schemes, of which he had many more than the world gave him credit for. He

Count d'Aehrenthal

was intelligent to an uncommon degree, but too personal and without enough application ever to carry through those schemes of which he felt so inordinately proud.

As a diplomat he was successful, but as a man he was hardly anything else than a sorry failure, owing to his limited tact and unlimited insolence. His enemies, of whom he had many, criticised him unmercifully; his adversaries always suspected his veracity; his friends doubted his sincerity, even when convinced of his abilities. His propensity for intrigue enabled him to achieve in the course of his rapid career several unmistakable triumphs, but it deprived him of the esteem of his contemporaries.

A great part of Baron d'Aehrenthal's diplomatic experience had been gained in Russia, but this did not help him to understand the Russian character, which he judged according to what he had seen in Petrograd. He had taken no care to study Russian middle classes or Russian *intelligentzia*—to use the word commonly employed when speaking of the Liberal and intellectual elements in the country. He had listened only to those who had never mixed with the people and who had no interests outside their own. He only gained knowledge of the cosmopolitan Society of Petrograd, and, when he found himself at the head of Austrian foreign affairs, he used this limited knowledge in all his subsequent actions as if it were typical of Russia as a whole.

Count d'Aehrenthal had been a great favourite among smart people in the Russian capital, and this fact had

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obscured his perceptions in regard to the importance of the thinking people of the nation. When he returned to Vienna it was with the conviction that he had acquired a thorough knowledge, not only of the Russian character, but also of the country in general, its resources, and its weaknesses, politically and economically. During his tenure of office in Russia he had been a guest at various country houses, during the course of which he had imagined he had learned enough to understand the material conditions of the vast Empire against which he meant to throw the Habsburg Monarchy; and when he found himself once more in his native country he hastened to use his fancied experience to start a new policy, more independent, more aggressive, more ambitious than the one which until then had been followed at the Ball Platz.

It has been said that Count d'Aehrenthal had ingratiated himself with the then heir presumptive to the Austrian Crown, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, and that it was partly owing to the latter's support that he had been chosen for the important position of Minister for Foreign Affairs. This is an absolute mistake. The one person whose protection did more for him than anything else was Frau Schratt, formerly an actress in one of the small Viennese theatres. Frau Schratt is in her way a remarkable woman. For years she has been a friend of the Emperor Francis Joseph, with whom she has considerable influence. She is also upon exceedingly good terms with the other members of the Imperial

The Emperor and Frau Schratt

Family; even with haughty Archduchess Valerie, who at one time had looked askance at her.

Frau Schratt is *au courant* of all that goes on in the way of politics in Austria, and, being more than discreet, keeps that knowledge to herself. She is not ambitious in the sense of wanting her influence to be recognised or acknowledged, neither is she resentful, and her invariable good nature has made her forgive the many attempts to oust her out of her position as the Sovereign's best friend and counsellor. Without being an avaricious woman, she has nevertheless contrived to gather up a comfortable little fortune, and she can afford to look upon the future with equanimity— and surely this is all that a woman whose youth is a thing of the past can hope or wish for, especially when, as is the case with Frau Schratt, she can boast of a peaceful conscience and of the knowledge that she has never, willingly, done harm to anyone, not even to those who tried their best to vilify her.

It was to the good offices of this lady that Count d'Achrenthal had recourse on more than one occasion at the time when he was still a struggling young diplomat, with hardly any other prospects in life save those of trudging through the different stages of his career until the time arrived when he should feel compelled by old age to retire upon the moderate pension which his services would procure. He was an amusing talker, as I think I have remarked already; he knew how to relate anecdotes in bright, pleasing language, and he had seen enough of foreign countries and of foreign Courts to have gathered

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quite a lot of stories that lost nothing through the way in which he repeated them. The Count was, too, a consummate flatterer of the fair sex, to whom he adopted a delicate, unassuming homage which had a particular attraction. When he found himself in the presence of a pretty woman he took good care to let her guess that he would like nothing so much as to be allowed to fall in love with her, and on the occasions when he met a less prepossessing one he instantly declared to her that he had done so from the first minute that he had set eyes upon her. This manœuvre produced the effect that he wanted, and made him a general favourite even with persons who were already seasoned with considerable experience, and who were amused rather than deceived by his tactics.

Whenever the exigencies of a smooth career brought Count d'Achrenthal to Vienna, his first call was on Frau Schratt, and, clever enough never to ask her point-blank to help him in any way, he yet contrived to imbue her with the feeling that she ought to do so. To tell the truth, the lady welcomed with an unusual pleasure the advent into her circle of intimate friends of the young diplomat, who, without any ostentation, gave her many useful details that proved of immense value to her in her conversations with the Emperor.

When, therefore, he left Russia to occupy a post in the Austrian Foreign Office at Vienna, she contrived to introduce him to Francis Joseph and to arrange several informal meetings between them at her own house; and

The Emperor's Undying Grudge

d'Achrenthal knew how to make use of the opportunities thus granted to him to secure favour in the eyes of the aged Monarch, whose weaknesses he had guessed at once and to which he learned very soon how to appeal.

I have already said that the Emperor had nourished an undying grudge against Russia since the days that a Romanoff had rushed to his aid and helped him to restore order among his revolted Hungarian subjects. Francis Joseph, moreover, was most anxious to persuade Austria to take the lead in Balkan affairs— not, perhaps, so much out of personal ambition as from his conviction that it was the only way to thwart the decided spread of the Greek religion in the Near East. The Emperor's confessor was a Jesuit who had imbued Francis Joseph with the sophistical thinking peculiar to his order and which was congenial to his own temperament. Under the guise of working for the benefit of the Roman Catholic faith, the Emperor of the dual monarchy followed the example set to him by his ancestress Marie Thérèse, who, according to the words of Frederick the Great, was “always weeping when talking of the misfortunes of Poland, but at the same time taking what she could out of its territory,” and he caught eagerly at the idea of annexing to his dominions the two unfortunate Slav provinces which, through an aberration of European politicians, had been handed over to his tender care as a result of the deliberations of the famous Congress of Berlin.

The possibility of taking this important political step began to haunt the imagination of the old Sovereign,

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who even went so far as to discuss it with his future successor. The latter, however, did not accept the idea with the alacrity which his uncle had expected. The fact was that Francis Ferdinand did not care to have Austria enter into new complications at a time when a change in the person of the Monarch might reasonably be expected to occur very soon. The Archduke Francis Ferdinand had in mind his own plans and ideas and ambitions, in which a policy of rivalry with Russia did not play any part for the moment. He was not a lover of this particular enemy of his country and of his race, but his common sense told him that, as things stood, it was far better and far wiser to leave them alone, and not to raise a ghost that it might become very difficult to lay later on. The Archduke, though a strong personality, stronger than clever, and though not devoid of the desire to leave his mark in the history of the world, had latterly begun to distrust the feelings of the Emperor William, without whose help it was impossible for Austria to think upon launching into any adventure, and he would have infinitely preferred his uncle to throw cold water upon the bellicose plans of Count d'Aehrenthal.

Count d'Aehrenthal, however, was not a man to give up any of his plans unless it suited him to do so. He therefore began to represent Francis Ferdinand to the Emperor as wanting in determination on account of the false position into which hismorganatic marriage with the Countess Sophy Chotek had thrust him. This contention was not, perhaps, so untrue after all, because it

Bosnia and Herzegovina

is certain that the marriage played a great part in the conduct of the Archduke and made him more susceptible to the influence of those who were of opinion that the peace of Europe ought to be guarded at all costs than perhaps would otherwise have been the case.

In any case the Archduke would be allowed very little say in the affairs of State, as the Emperor, always of a tyrannical nature, was not at all inclined to allow his nephew's voice to be heard; but the acceptability of Count d'Aehrenthal's insinuations led the Emperor to become persuaded of his (the Count's) political acumen, and he put himself blindly into his hands, thus laying the first stick to the fire that was so soon to set Europe ablaze.

The annexation of Bosnia and of Herzegovina, to the great surprise of many politicians, passed off without bringing any further complications. The fact was that no one wanted to go to war for the sake of these two provinces, and if Count d'Aehrenthal had hoped this bold movement would furnish the pretext for an attack by Russia on the realm of the Habsburgs, he was vastly mistaken. The fact had been discounted and discussed in all the different chancelleries, and it had been decided that it would be stupid to play into the enemy's hands and to give the Austrian Government the satisfaction of finding that its schemes had met with the success which it had expected.

The failure of his scheme caused a deal of sorrow to Count d'Aehrenthal. He had told any number of un-

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truths to his Sovereign concerning the material resources of Russia; he had lured him on with the hopes of an easy victory over the Muscovite forces, and he became deeply concerned to find that, no matter what he attempted to do, no one seemed to take the least notice. It was then that were started, not only in Vienna itself, but all over the Balkan Peninsula—at Constantinople, Bucharest, Belgrade and Sofia, intrigues that culminated in the first, and very soon afterwards in the second, Balkan War, which could never have taken place had not King Ferdinand of Bulgaria been encouraged in his scheme of destroying Serbia by the assurances of the Austrian Minister, Count de Tarnow-Tarnovski, a Pole who, besides his Austrian sympathies, was actuated in all he did by the traditional enmity which existed between Russia and his own race.

It is difficult to imagine what would have happened had Count d'Aehrenthal remained in the land of the living. Perhaps the war that broke out last year might have done so earlier; perhaps it would have been delayed; no one knows. But though relatively a young man, the Austrian Minister was carried off after an illness of considerable duration. He left behind him an inheritance embarrassed by many mistakes and endangered by many follies.

The question as to who should be his successor became one of absorbing interest, and was followed everywhere—in Berlin, as well as in Paris, London and Petrograd—with considerable anxiety. Many names were put for-

Count Berchtold

ward as men likely to continue the policy which, in the opinion of the Emperor Francis Joseph, had been so successfully inaugurated by Count d'Aehrenthal. None of them, however, found favour in the Emperor's eyes, until at last, to the surprise of some people who believed he had insufficient experience for such a post, the Austrian Ambassador in Petrograd, Count Berchtold, was appointed by Imperial rescript Minister for Foreign Affairs and head of the Imperial Household, two offices which by tradition are always linked together.

Count Berchtold was very different in character from his predecessor. First of all, he was a gentleman, not only by education, but also by birth, and belonged to the highest social sphere. There was nothing of the self-made man about him, but a good deal of that arrogance which is so characteristic of the Austrian aristocracy, and which combined, as is so often the case, with inexperience of the realities of life makes it such a dangerous element in the political arena of Austria. He was fairly intelligent, well intentioned, and he had too much to lose to adopt on his own initiative an aggressive attitude in regard to the people he had to deal with. When he assumed office he earnestly intended to apply his efforts toward establishing good relations between his country and her neighbours. His stay in Russia had given him a strong sympathy for that nation, and he was far too much of a *grand seigneur* not to have accepted with a grateful courtesy the attentions that had been showered upon him during the years which he had spent in the Russian capital.

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On entering office at the Ball Platz he found that, owing to the influence of Count d'Aehrenthal, there existed among its leading officials an atmosphere of hostility against the Triple Understanding, which personally he did not share and which he applied himself to destroy. Unfortunately, he had to deal with such strong prejudices that he very soon relinquished the attempt, and, unrecognised by himself, people contrived to impose their points of view upon him and applied themselves to thwart his plans, to twist his words and intentions into something considerably different from what he had intended them to be.

The first person with whom he had to contend was the Emperor himself, who, in spite of his age, kept himself well informed as to all that was going on, and who meant the foreign policy of Austria to be conducted on the lines which Count d'Aehrenthal had sketched and of which he had approved. He was encouraged in this determination by the German Ambassador, Baron von Tschirsky, who played an important part in all the events which preceded the breaking out of the war, and to whose advice and intrigues a goodly proportion of the complications and difficulties under which the world is labouring at the present moment are due. Count Berchtold, weak and distrustful of his own strength, very soon found himself unable to find his way among all these different obstacles, the significance of which he had not gauged when he had consented to abandon his snug position in Petrograd for the difficult and responsible post of

False Hopes

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

Nevertheless, he did his utmost to overcome certain prejudices and to throw down certain barriers erected by the want of good faith of other people. He used for his purpose the personal relations he had entertained with M. Izvolsky, at that time head of the Russian Foreign Office, with whom he had always been on quite good terms. Count Berchtold invited M. Izvolsky to confer with him in an informal and friendly way at his country seat in Bohemia, where a sort of mutual agreement was come to which, as the Press was informed, assured the peace of Europe in the near future. Unfortunately, M. Izvolsky was not the man to make use of certain advantages which the aforesaid interview might have procured for him had he not been too confident of the impossibility of the Triple Alliance, which he had already good reason to believe to be only a dual one, being able to fight the Triple Understanding.

M. Izvolsky was more clever and certainly more brilliant than Count Berchtold, but it is a question whether he appreciated at their proper worth the obstacles which the latter had to contend with, and whether he did not treat too lightly the dark clouds that at that time had already begun to loom over the political horizon. To tell the truth, no one feared Austria. No one ever gave a thought to the possibility that she might be used by Germany to set in motion the machinery of a European war.

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When the Balkan crisis came to an apparent end, no one felt happier than Count Berchtold. It had given him more than one sleepless night, and he had often wondered whither its intricacies would lead his country. He was no lover of Germany or of German ways, and only tolerated them because it was impossible for Austria to escape from the bonds which she had willingly assumed, thanks to the clever diplomacy of Prince Bismarck. At the same time he had enough confidence in himself to believe that he would be able to cope with the Balkan complications, which he still imagined were remote, but out of which might arise a conflict with Russia.

Events, however, brought him more than one surprise and more than one cause for considerable worry. The assassination of the King of Greece caused some apprehension among the diplomatic world, as his son was felt to be in some respects an unknown, and in other directions a dangerous, quantity. But somehow, in spite of these incidents, matters went on toward a tolerable, if not a satisfactory, adjustment of the pending difficulties, and Count Berchtold, who was a very rich man, and not at all in need of office, began to speculate as to whether it would not become possible for him to hand over his responsibilities, and to seek, in the forests and parks that surrounded his ancestral castle, a rest to which he felt he had a right.

Providence, however, did not mean him to get it—at least, at that particular time. He had been asked by the heir to the throne, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, to

Berchtold and William II.

visit him at Konopischt, in Bohemia, during the short stay which the Emperor William II. had made there, and had had thus the opportunity to confer otherwise than in an official manner with the German Sovereign. The result of this conference had been highly satisfactory in the opinion of the Austrian Minister, who had returned home very much impressed by the conciliatory disposition exhibited by the German Emperor, whom he believed to be far too impulsive to be able to cloak his real intentions. Everything, therefore, seemed to him to be progressing favourably when, one June morning, whilst Count Berchtold was still enjoying the perfume of the roses for which his gardens were famous, the news was brought to him of the crime which had put an end to the existence of his host and hostess of a few days before, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand and the Duchess of Hohenberg.

Count Berchtold hastened back to Vienna, which he reached a few hours before the Emperor himself returned from Ischl. Notwithstanding his optimism and the false light in which he had hitherto viewed European events, he fully realised the magnitude of the event that had just taken place. Apart from the natural feelings of horror with which it inspired him, he guessed that it might prove a prelude to a further catastrophe of unusual gravity and seriousness. It is related, though, of course, it is almost impossible to know with accuracy, that during these first days of consternation he avoided the foreign diplomats, not excepting the German Ambassador, who had hastened to the Ball Platz as soon as he had heard

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that the Austrian Foreign Minister had returned. He wanted to be alone to realise the extent of the disaster that had overtaken the Monarchy by the disappearance of the Archduke, who was, perhaps, the only strong man which it possessed.

Francis Joseph himself took the murder of his nephew and successor with far more equanimity than did his advisers. He met this new misfortune with his usual fortitude, and did not exhibit any untoward emotion when apprised of it.

The unfortunate Archduke was not even allowed a Habsburg funeral. Questions of etiquette intervened, and, just as his wife had not been permitted to enter officially into the bosom of the Imperial Family, her mortal remains, together with his, were exiled from the vaults of the Capuchin Church where rest all that is left of the Habsburgs. It was with the greatest trouble that the Emperor was persuaded to allow a religious service for the victims of the Sarajevo tragedy to be celebrated in the Augustine Chapel adjacent to the Hofburg, and to permit the coffin of the Duchess of Hohenberg to remain next to her husband's whilst this service proceeded. Immediately after it was over the two bodies were removed at night, and almost in secrecy, to one of the estates belonging to the late Archduke, and buried without ceremony; and, saddest thing of all, it was only there that the orphaned children of the unfortunate pair could at last bid a sad farewell to their parents. In Vienna this had been forbidden to them. The scandal

Was Austria's Hand Forced ?

was so great that it appealed even to the prejudiced minds of the Austrian aristocracy, many members of which revolted openly against the decisions of the old Emperor and protested at the indecent way in which the funeral ceremonies for the heir of the Austrian Empire had been conducted.

Who would have thought that after this the Emperor Francis Joseph would nevertheless have believed himself obliged to avenge his nephew's death upon people who had had no share in it? Such was the case, however, and the world saw the unprecedented spectacle of an old man, with one foot already in his grave, meditating conquests and pondering as to how he could precipitate his country into a war which no one except himself and the German Emperor wanted.

People have said that when the Austrian Government sent its ultimatum to Servia it had been compelled to do so by the insistence of Germany. This was true in a certain sense, but false in another. The Ball Platz had all along been looking for the pretext to invade Servian territory, and to annex it afterwards. The existence of this independent kingdom had presented a serious danger to the Austrian Monarchy ever since Bosnia and Herzegovina had been swallowed by their so-called protectors.

The two provinces contained a considerable population of Servian origin who did not relish becoming Austrians, and who kept looking toward Belgrade for signs of help to regain their lost independence. This did not suit the politicians who ruled at Vienna, and

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who were persuaded—which, perhaps, was not so untrue after all—that Russia intended to stand by the Karageorgevitch dynasty and to support it in opposition to King Ferdinand of Bulgaria, who was supposed to be entirely under the influence of Austrian statesmen. The murder of the Archduke afforded a unique opportunity to air past grievances, together with new ones, and to make a bold attempt to reduce Servia to the condition of a dependant of the Ball Platz, unable to make a single step without first obtaining the permission of its masters.

Perhaps Count Berchtold might not altogether have sanctioned this line of policy, but he was not gifted with sufficient independence of character to be able to resist the clamours of those who told him that it was his duty to see the murder of the Archduke properly avenged, and that if he did not show sufficient firmness in the attempt he might be suspected of not feeling too sorry it had taken place.

The person who kept urging Count Berchtold to take steps in this direction was the German Ambassador, Baron von Tschirsky, a diplomat of considerable intelligence and wiliness, who knew much more than Count Berchtold ever did about the true state of European politics, and who had watched them with unflagging interest from all the different posts he had occupied in succession. He was a pleasant man, who possessed the great quality of knowing how to keep silent, and in his amusing conversations contrived always to obtain, and never to impart, information to those with whom he

Baron von Tschirsky

indulged in small talk. He belonged to an old school of diplomacy ; and though he understood quite well that as things stood a war between Germany and France on one frontier, backed by Russia on another, was almost inevitable, he preferred it should break out through the fault of somebody else than his own countrymen.

Whether Baron von Tschirsky acted of his own accord or followed secret instructions received from Berlin it is difficult to tell. The fact remains that it was principally at his instigation that the famous ultimatum which was the apparent cause of the whole trouble was framed and composed. Without him it can be doubted whether the Ball Platz would have found sufficient courage to send it. Even after it was dispatched Count Berchtold kept pondering in his mind whether it would not be possible after all to submit the matter to the decisions of a conference or congress of the Great Powers. Baron von Tschirsky noticed this indecision, and having occasion to be received by the Emperor Francis Joseph, to whom he brought an official letter of condolence from his Sovereign on the murder of the Archduke, he did his best to persuade the aged Monarch that it was his duty to remain firm in presence of the undoubted encouragement which the Baron asserted this atrocious crime had received, not only among the general public in Servia, but also from the Servian Government, which, he further declared, had known all along it was being premeditated, but which had taken no steps to prevent it. The idea agreed too well with the personal feelings of the Emperor for him not to

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accept it eagerly, and in the long run it was he who gave positive orders to Count Berchtold to follow the instructions which he had given to him immediately upon his return to Schönbrunn after the assassination of his nephew.

This personal intervention of the head of the Habsburg dynasty in the matter of the ultimatum disposes of the theory put forward in some quarters that his state of senility prevented him from doing anything to stop his Ministers in their course of action. Far from this being the case, it was Francis Joseph himself who all along had insisted on an aggressive attitude being adopted in regard to Servia, whose existence appeared to be a crime in his eyes far worse than the one which had deprived him of his heir. The fact was that he had been so entirely persuaded by different artifices resorted to in Berlin, that it was his duty to insist on being left a free hand over the country which he believed harboured the murderers of the Archduke whom he had not deemed worthy of a decent funeral, that he had lost sight of the true circumstances of the case, and had rushed blindly upon a course of action before which anyone else would have recoiled with horror.

The state of mind of the Emperor at that time can be compared to a loaded rifle; the least movement is sufficient to make it go off. A cartridge bound to explode had been introduced by Germany, and Germany was quietly waiting to see what would be the effects of that explosion. As things stood, the influence of Count

Baron de Macchio

Berchtold had dwindled down to nothing ; a certain military party in close relation with the German General Staff were the sole masters of the situation.

When Russia sent her request to Austria to grant more time to Servia there were several people at the Ball Platz who, beginning to realise whither the obstinacy of their chiefs was leading the country, were of opinion that things had gone rather too far, and that it would be better to display more leniency. Count Berchtold, who had all along obeyed with considerable reluctance the peremptory instructions which he had received, was not far from sharing their point of view. He would, perhaps, have replied in a conciliatory spirit to the demands of Russia had he not at this juncture been ordered to go to the country for a few days, evidently in order to elude a personal interview with the Russian chargé d'affaires and to allow the Austrian Minister at Belgrade to remain without any news from the Ball Platz at a time when it would have been more necessary than at any other for him to be in constant touch and communication with his immediate superiors.

During Count Berchtold's absence his functions were exercised by Baron de Macchio, an excellent official, but devoid of initiative, who was admirably well informed as to anything which concerned diplomatic traditions, but who, when left to his own inspiration, was incapable of anything but following the path he supposed was the one his predecessors would have embarked upon in similar circumstances. He was, moreover, very susceptible to

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flattery, and boasted of his patriotism and clear political outlook. It was easy to circumvent such a man, and Baron von Tschirsky grasped at once the advantages which arose out of the absence of Count Berchtold. When the latter returned from his enforced holiday he found that the demands formulated by Russia had been declined, and that the Austrian Minister at Belgrade had already asked for his passports and left Servian territory for the adjacent town of Semlin, where he remained awaiting further instructions, which Baron de Macchio had declared he was unable to give until he had conferred with his immediate chief.

The die was cast, and there remained nothing more to do than to make the best of a very bad case. Still some people were left who refused to give up hope, and who kept looking for a ground of conciliation. At first Count Berchtold belonged to their number, but his view quickly changed, partly, it can be supposed, through fear of being suspected of not sticking to the guns which he had been falsely accused of having set in action. He might have withdrawn from the struggle, thus separating himself violently from the party to which he had been supposed to belong. But with it all he was a gentleman, and he would have considered it quite unbecoming to abandon in a moment of crisis those who had put him into a position he had perhaps been wrong to accept, but which he did not like to forsake at a period of national danger. He had been weak all along, and he knew it; and perhaps the consciousness that such was the case made

Count Berchtold's Dilemma

him ferocious at times, and induced him to applaud openly what most likely he deplored in the secret of his soul.

As matters stood, he resisted no longer the tide that rapidly bore him toward the vortex in which his reputation as a statesman was definitely wrecked. He applied himself to the task of smoothing as far as possible the different antagonisms which in Vienna itself arose among the members of the Ministry at the head of which he stood, but his rôle was a passive one, and he submitted to the events that instead of being led by him, as they ought to have been, simply carried him along with them toward an unknown and a very dark future.

Count Berchtold nevertheless rendered some services to the cause of peace during those trying days of July, 1914. He sincerely desired to ward off the approaching catastrophe, and but for him it might have occurred a few days earlier. He was an honest man, imbued with the prejudices inherent to every great Austrian nobleman, but at least there was no falseness in his character. He was overwhelmed by a calamity for which nothing had prepared him, which he had hardly foreseen, and which he was neither clever enough nor brave enough to face otherwise than by blind submission to the will of people stronger than himself. Between the Emperor, backed by the German Ambassador on the one side, and by Count Tisza, the Hungarian Premier, on the other, he lost control of his independence of judgment, and fell because he lacked the courage to resist.

It is a curious figure that of Count Tisza, whose influ-

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ence had more to do than the world supposes with the whole Servian incident. Ambitious, restless, desirous of seeing Hungary become the supreme power in Austria, he would have been an entirely superior man if his earlier education had prepared him for the part he was called upon to play. The Count did not like Francis Joseph, and hated the supremacy to which Austria pretended in Hungary. He had a very clear judgment, great presence of mind, and quick intuition as to the consequences of every grave political action. He bore against Russia the grudge which is shared by almost every man and woman in his country, but he cared little for Germany, feeling convinced, as he said more than once to his friends, that she meant in case of a victorious war, won in common with the troops of Francis Joseph, to annihilate entirely the last vestiges of independence left in Austria, and to oblige her to enter the German Confederation, thus becoming just like Bavaria, Würtemberg and Saxony—a mere tributary of German greatness, and a slave to German politics.

In view of this eventuality Count Tisza determined to take the lead in the conduct of the affairs, not only of the Hungarian kingdom but also of those of the Austrian Empire, so as to be able, when the opportunity came, to negative any arrangements that might injure the interests or threaten the independence of his own land.

Since the constitution granted to Hungary in 1867, this turbulent country, though she had acquiesced to the conditions offered to her by her oppressor of a few years

Count Tisza

before, had never abdicated her right to be considered as a separate kingdom, ruled by a Habsburg, but not by the Austrian Sovereign. Therein lay the distinction, and it was a very essential one. Hungary could boast of a population that nothing had subdued into renouncing its privileges, and of an aristocracy haughtier than any other in Europe and which claimed to have a voice in all the decisions in which it was concerned. Hungary did not mind if Austria were swallowed by Germany, but she meant very decidedly not to share such a fate.

Count Tisza—who knew as much about foreign politics as anyone in Europe, who had studied them with passion, and constantly remained informed as to their smallest details—realised perfectly well the immense consequences which a war was bound to bring along with it. He had made up his mind to get Hungary out of it unimpaired as to her position in the European constellation no matter what happened to Austria, upon whom he looked with contempt, did not trust, and only tolerated until the day when he could rid his country of her altogether. Out of the ashes of the general conflagration fired by the Ball Platz he hoped to see arise a new Hungary, free and great, able to exist alone, and to forget that a time had ever been when she had formed but a portion of an Empire that had foundered either in the throes of a defeat or in the triumph of a victory.

Austria in 1914 could not have started on the misguided course of politics she rushed upon with such utter unconcern as to what was going to be the result, had she

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not been able to lean upon Hungary, and had she not been backed by Hungarian public opinion. This fact alone gave the President of the Hungarian Cabinet quite an exceptional position in Vienna, and Count Tisza would not have been the man he is had he not known how to exploit this circumstance for his own benefit. He therefore applied himself to prove to Count Berchtold, and indirectly to the Emperor, that though he freely gave them his adhesion and his support in the crisis they had provoked, he did not mean to do it for nothing, but fully intended to be repaid for it with the pound of flesh he desired to obtain. He insisted on being consulted upon every occasion when anything of a serious nature occurred, and gave the functionaries of the Ball Platz to understand that if it had been ever their intention to ignore him, they had better give up the idea or he would not answer for the consequences of such a rash act.

What the Hungarian statesman desired was to see Count Berchtold replaced by a Hungarian whom he could entirely trust, and on whom he could depend to act according to the interests and wants of their common Fatherland. He was far too cunning and too experienced not to understand that such a thing was impossible to obtain at once, and he therefore set himself to undermine the position of the Foreign Minister of Francis Joseph, and also to make life so intolerable for him that he would at last himself come to the conclusion he had better retire from the scene of active politics where he had proved such a failure.

Baron Burian

It did not take him very long to succeed in this simple plan. Count Berchtold discovered at last that, between the military party and the opposition which he encountered in all that he attempted to do in Hungary, his situation had become impossible. There was no necessity for him to remain in office, and indeed his large fortune and extensive estates had suffered from lack of attention in his absence; his wife, too, did not care for Vienna. He therefore wrote to the Emperor tending his resignation, which was accepted with alacrity.

With the departure of Count Berchtold the Ball Platz found itself once more placed under the control of a self-made man. Baron Burian was a Hungarian, whom people said had Jewish blood among his ancestry. He was clever, had considerable experience of the world, very decided opinions, and a strong will, which in a certain sense was a misfortune to him, because it prevented him from discussing with people who might have proved of use to him the current questions of the day with which he was not entirely familiar. He possessed an excellent belief in his own personal merits, and was a blind and submissive follower of Count Tisza.

When he assumed office one of his first cares had been to go to Berlin, where he had long conferences with Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg, from which Baron Burian carried away with him the impression that Austria was not altogether in the good graces of her powerful ally, who reproached her for not having made the stand which had been expected before the common enemy. The fact

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was that the pusillanimity shown at the beginning of the war by the Austrian troops had produced a contemptuous impression in Germany, and the General Staff in the latter country had decided to enforce a decision it had lately come to, to place the soldiers of Francis Joseph under the orders of Prussian generals and Prussian officers.

This determination had, of course, been resented deeply in Vienna, though not in Budapest, where public opinion remained more than indifferent in regard to what was occurring elsewhere. The Hungarians knew that so far as they were concerned they had fought well, and that one of the results of the war would be to separate them entirely from Austria; they therefore accepted with a complete philosophy the pretensions put forward by the German commanders, sure as they were that these would not influence in the least that one result of the war for which alone they cared—the recognition of their absolute independence from Vienna.

Count Tisza was an excellent politician. He therefore experienced considerable satisfaction in hearing that his friend and associate Baron Burian had played his cards just as he had expected him to do, and in acquiescing to the German demands secured for himself and for his party the good graces of the Berlin Cabinet. Count Berchtold would have protested indignantly against this moral annihilation of Austria on the battle-field and this subordination of her army to the pretensions of her ally. He would have tried to speak with Dr. von Bethmann-

The March of General Mackensen

Hollweg as equal to equal—and would have done no good.

Baron Burian was more submissive and far cleverer, inasmuch as he gave Germany a bone that he did not require himself, the chewing of which might prove infinitely useful to Hungary later on. He guessed, and Count Tisza had guessed too, long before him, that in exchange for the independence of Austria one of the most tangible results of the war would be the absolute freedom of Hungary, under a Sovereign who would not reside in Vienna and who would remain entirely outside that German confederation in which Austria would find herself engulfed, whether she liked it or not.

Events justified this appreciation. The Austrian armies, which up to that period had suffered one defeat after the other, very soon turned over a new leaf after they had been placed under German command; and the united action of the Austrian staff, backed by the energetic march forward of General von Mackensen, ousted the Russians from Galicia and returned this province, together with its capital Lemberg, which for ten months had been occupied by Russia, and the fortress of Przemyśl into the possession of the Habsburgs. The lost prestige of Francis Joseph's troops was restored, and the victories have paved the way for the absorption of Austria by her secular and traditional enemy Prussia, and for the constitution of Hungary as a separate kingdom, dependent on no one but itself for its existence in Europe. In 1870 German unity had been partly attained

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thanks to the initial mistakes of France and of the Imperial Government which ruled her ; in 1915 this unity has been virtually completed by the introduction of Austria into the sphere of its activity thanks to the astuteness of Count Tisza and of his friends and the errors of Count Berchtold and his policy—a galaxy of circumstances out of which a new State will be born and an ancient Monarchy will disappear.

IV

BULGARIA AND SERVIA

IT is but natural that after having spoken so fully about Austria my thoughts should turn toward the Balkans. It was in the Balkans that Austrian intrigues found a wide field of activity; it was there also that Francis Joseph and his Ministers discovered the pretext to attack Russia, whose alliance with France and with Great Britain gave them such apprehension.

In the days when King Milan reigned at Belgrade, and the Obrenovitch dynasty seemed destined to occupy for a long time to come the Servian throne, Servia had been entirely under Austrian influence. At this period there were in Vienna at the head of affairs men gifted with great intelligence and wide political experience, and it was recognised among the powers that ruled at the Ball Platz that the interest of the Dual Monarchy required a sharp look out to be kept on all that was going on in Belgrade. King Milan's want of character afforded ample scope for presuming that he would not remain insensible to certain inducements. His finances were in a chronic condition of embarrassment, and his gratitude would be assured to any who would afford timely aid in this direction.

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Milan was a clever man in his way, with perhaps more Bohemianism in his manners than was consistent with his dignity as a Monarch. Had he possessed sufficient money to gratify all his tastes, it is likely that he would have made a tolerable Sovereign. As matters were, however, he found himself compelled to seek the help sometimes of his friends, sometimes of his enemies, and more frequently of those who believed it advantageous to their interests to secure him as a friend.

This peculiar position accounts for a great deal of Milan's follies and mistakes, even when it does not excuse them. He had married for love a beautiful but wilful and passionate woman, who on her side had been actuated only by ambition when she had consented to wed. Natalie de Keczkó's best qualities were spoiled by her conviction of her own beauty, before which she remained in a state of perpetual admiration, that caused her to resort to extraordinary precautions in order to preserve it unimpaired. For instance, it is related that she used to sleep with veal cutlets on her face so as to improve her complexion, and that she spent many hours every day lying straight on her back on a very hard bed with the object of keeping her exquisite figure intact. This did not always suit Milan, who would have preferred having his wife more to himself, and it helped him considerably to get tired of her, and to show himself in time less indulgent to her caprices than had been the case in the early years of their marriage.

Natalie was supposed to be entirely Russian in her

Milan and His Queen

sympathies. People who knew her well, however, relate that in reality she had absolutely no political leanings of any kind, and that whenever she showed Russian or anti-Russian feelings, which also happened now and then, these outbursts coincided with some public manifestation on the part of the King, with whom she was always at variance, by principle if not by taste. As a fact, on those occasions when it would have been both necessary and profitable for her to express her opinions, she did not do so, and never even realised that this would have helped her considerably in avoiding her numerous and ever-recurring quarrels with her husband.

Milan, in spite of the abominable way in which he had treated his Queen, never ceased to love her in a sensual, brutal kind of manner. I have been told by a gentleman who was in a position to know—M. Guentchitch, one of Servia's most prominent politicians, who had been one of the Ministers of King Milan—that the latter, long after his separation from the Queen, when speaking of her, used always to say that he had never seen a more beautiful or accomplished woman. It was a thousand pities that Natalie never understood her Consort's character. Had she done so it is probable that many sad things which later on took place at Belgrade could never have occurred.

Milan's whole existence was one long intrigue, and unfortunately for him, and for his reputation in history, he allowed himself to be led in succession by people of whom one was less trustworthy than the other. And

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when at last he met with a man who proved a real friend to him in more ways than one, it was already too late to repair his former errors and to derive any real benefit out of this disinterested affection which was offered to him with unbounded generosity.

The friend to whom I am referring was Count Eugene Zichy, a Hungarian nobleman of remarkable intelligence and of considerable wealth. He was also a prominent politician in his country, and one who hated Russia with all the ferocity of a man whose relations had suffered at the hands of the armies of Nicholas I. during the mutiny of 1848. Count Zichy thought that it would be a fine thing to snatch Serbia from the sphere of Russian influence, and applied all his efforts to win over Milan to his point of view. The latter immediately yielded to the temptation, and in exchange for several large cheques proceeded to exile or imprison all the leaders of the so-called Russian party in his country.

Unfortunately for him, and still more for the man who had believed he could make him a tool in the cause of Austrian politics, the King's position in Serbia was already compromised. His quarrels with the Queen had discredited not only his person, but the prestige of his throne, and whilst many people still liked him, few could be found who respected him. He had himself destroyed his popularity.

Nevertheless, he was still in possession of some authority; at least in Belgrade, if not in the interior of the country, where one was less liable to be tempted by

Alexander as King

the financial considerations which played no trifling part among certain circles of the capital. Milan contrived to keep at the head of affairs a ministry favourable to Austria, and disdaining the good advice proffered to him from all sides, he resolutely turned his back upon Russia and gave all his confidence to her enemies. The step was fatal. Very soon its effects came to be felt, and Milan went into exile after the pretence of an abdication which was nothing but a farce, as he fully intended to go on governing in the name of his son, whom he had put forward in the hope that the boy would never take the trouble to concern himself seriously about his father's doings as Regent.

Alexander, however, turned out to be quite different from what his father had expected, and, partly on the advice of his mother—who had always contrived to keep up her relations with him, notwithstanding the barbarous and brutal way in which Milan had separated her from this only child she possessed—and partly at the instigation of a few friends of M. Pashitch—whom a strong sense of patriotism urged to try to do something to bring back to power this remarkable politician and great patriot—he overturned the Regency and took into his own hands the reins of the government of the country.

For some time all went well, and then came Alexander's adventure with Madame Draga Maschin, and the dreadful crime to which they both fell victims. A new era was about to begin for Servia under another dynasty, the head of which, Prince Peter Karageorgevitch, was

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called to the throne he had secretly coveted for a long time.

With the accession of King Peter Servia began to make progress. First of all, the Russian influence that had been so cleverly undermined by Austrian agents and Austrian money revived once more. The Russian Foreign Office had grasped at last the importance of keeping not only an attentive eye but also a strong hand on the leading politicians of Belgrade. This was not a hard matter, as in general Russia was very much liked, especially since the growing ambitions of Prince Ferdinand of Coburg had begun to cause some apprehension among Servian political circles, where it was feared that he would try to obtain some advantages for Bulgaria to the detriment of her neighbour Servia. In view of these developments it is not to be wondered that as soon as it was noticed that the old and cordial relations which had existed between the Petrograd and the Belgrade Cabinets seemed likely to be resumed, not only M. Pashitch, but all those who belonged to his party, should have rallied to the new dynasty, whose accession they believed had discouraged Austrian emissaries as well as inspired some sympathy in Russia.

It soon became evident that the new King meant to remain faithful to that Muscovite alliance which he firmly believed constituted the only chance that Servia still possessed of remaining an independent kingdom. He used certain influence which he had in Petrograd as well as in Moscow to obtain the nomination at his Court as

M. Hartwig

Russian Minister of a diplomat who had been in touch already with the East, and who could therefore form a dependable opinion as to the various Austrian intrigues, which at the time I am referring to had started with renewed vigour to undermine every manifestation of sympathy that was uttered in favour of the Tsar. He succeeded after some time in his design, and M. Nicholas Hartwig was appointed as Russian representative in Belgrade.

M. Hartwig thoroughly understood the Eastern character and the intricacies of Eastern politics. For a considerable number of years he had been at the Embassy at Constantinople—at the time when it was administered by Count Ignatieff—and he had learned to appreciate at their proper value the protestations of friendship, or the declarations of enmity, which were liberally distributed all over the Balkan Peninsula to the people who happened, for one reason or another, to be prominent in that part of the world. He hated Austria, and he bitterly disliked Germany, whom he accused of fomenting all the troubles which were regularly taking place either at Sofia, Athens or some other Eastern capital. At the same time he did not hold to the opinion that Russia, as some politicians suggested in that country itself, should slacken her interest in the affairs of the Balkans, and leave a free field to her enemies in that direction. He therefore applied himself to win the favour of King Peter, already very well disposed toward him, and he began negotiating the marriage of the pretty and attractive Princess Hélène of Servia,

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the King's only daughter, with a member of the Russian Imperial Family, Prince John Constantinovitch, the eldest son of the Grand Duke Constantine.

In this delicate affair M. Hartwig succeeded completely, and this gave him at once quite an exceptional position at the little Court of Belgrade, where he became a *persona grata*, not only with the Royal Family, but also in Society. Among the embassies, too, officials became very quickly aware that they had to deal with a strong personality, who would not allow himself to be circumvented either by Turkish or by Austrian intrigues. In fact, it was in regard to the latter that M. Hartwig occupied himself the most, trying to discover their importance and to find out their ultimate object and aim. He was fond of the Servians, whom he considered to have been very badly treated, and during the two Balkan wars M. Hartwig exerted himself in a most active manner in favour of Servia. It was thanks to his efforts that the disputes existing between her and the newly-erected kingdom of Bulgaria were at last settled to the satisfaction of both parties, and he laid with M. Pashitch the foundations of a vast scheme which was to secure to the poor little kingdom on the Austrian frontier the protection of Russia against any possible aggression. He had always felt frightened at what Turkey might feel tempted to do, and had never looked with favourable eyes upon all that was going on at Constantinople, where his unerring instinct made him scent danger when no one else even suspected its nearness. He kept urging M. Pashitch

Death of M. Hartwig

to declare himself more openly in favour of Russian supremacy in the Balkan Peninsula, which he considered ought never to be shaken in the future. In a word, M. Hartwig wanted to bring back to life the glorious days when the power of Count Ignatieff at Stamboul was often pronounced to be superior to that of the Commander of the Faithful.

M. Hartwig found the ground very favourable to the active Russian propaganda he prosecuted from the very first day of his arrival in Belgrade. He was not only an exceedingly clever man, but also a sincere patriot. He was kept admirably well informed by his numerous agents as to the progress of Austrian intrigue, and it was said that he held in reserve several trump cards in the game which he was playing against his Austrian colleague. It is not, indeed, beyond possibility that, had M. Hartwig been alive at the time the ultimatum was presented, he might have induced the Austrian Ambassador to explain to his Government that if it pressed matters too much with Servia it might lead to unpleasant disclosures from which the Ball Platz might not emerge too creditably. Unfortunately, M. Hartwig died suddenly a short time after the crime of Sarajevo, and he carried with him to his grave many secrets that would have been of tremendous value to know to-day. He was exceedingly discreet, and handled his affairs alone. This fact gave him the opportunity to learn far more than a diplomat could do through the usual channels, but it meant a great loss to his country when his secrets died with him. He had friends every-

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where and found servants who fully trusted him, and he held in his hand the thread of almost all the undercurrents, of which there exist so many in the East. But he did not allow even his staff to learn who were his agents and what they reported to him. What goes some way to confirm the idea that the Russian Ambassador would have been able to persuade Austria to think twice before hustling Servia into war is the curious circumstance that, so long as M. Hartwig was alive, Austrian diplomacy did not show its cards; yet the moment he was gone the conciliating spirit changed, and the attitude of the Austrian Minister, Baron Giesl von Gieslingen, became suddenly aggressive.

In an article which I wrote concerning Austria and her despicable policy about a year ago, a few days after war had been declared, I quoted a remark attributed to the Servian Prime Minister in reply to the question put to him by a foreign diplomat accredited at the Court of Belgrade. This particular ambassador had felt indignant at the apparent submission with which Servia had seemed to agree to the Austrian demands. "You are making yourselves the servants of Austria," he had exclaimed; "and what will she give you for it?" "Her refusal to accept our humiliation," had replied astute M. Pashitch. And subsequent events proved that his appreciation of a most complicated situation had been right. It was essential at the critical juncture in which the whole of Europe found itself at that particular moment that the responsibilities of each party should be clearly estab-

M. Pashitch

lished, and this could have been hardly possible had Servia appeared intransigent or had refused, as she would have been entitled to do, to discuss the strange demands which Vienna had formulated. On the contrary, in seeming to yield, she proved, not only to the whole of Europe, but also established quite clearly for the future appreciation of history, that the war, which was then already admitted to be inevitable, had not been of the seeking either of Russia or still less of Servia. By his wise conduct M. Pashitch rendered an immense service to the cause of the Allies, and this ought to be remembered by them with gratitude when the time comes for balancing accounts.

This old statesman is gifted with Eastern keenness of perception wedded to an Occidental culture, and during the long periods of imprisonment which he had to undergo for his political convictions has added to the large store of learning which he already possessed. From these vicissitudes he has emerged with ripened experience and with a profound knowledge of mankind and of its qualities and imperfections.

M. Pashitch was always ambitious, with a noble ambition that had nothing personal about it, and he was a sincere patriot, devoid of any prejudices, and determined to do his duty toward Servia, no matter at what cost. He had perceived long before anyone else the danger which threatened his country, and during the deliberations which took place at Bucharest, previous to the conclusion of the treaty which put an end to the

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second Balkan War, he had openly expressed to King Carol of Roumania his apprehensions concerning the future. He dreaded duplicity on the part of Tsar Ferdinand of Bulgaria, and he was perfectly well aware that the latter's dangerous dreams of the establishment of an Eastern Empire, of which he would be the head, were encouraged at Vienna, where it was believed that this would eventually put a check in the way of Russia and at the same time bring about the reunion of the National Bulgarian Church with the Roman Catholic one.

Such a consummation had been one of the ardent wishes of the late Pope Leo XIII., who, in his desire to see it become an accomplished fact, had looked with far more indulgent eyes than could have been expected upon the conversion, in 1896, of Prince Ferdinand's young son to the Orthodox faith, a conversion the reason for which was so little understood in Petrograd, where no one had realised that in its way it was one of the greatest blows that could have been levelled at Russian influence in the Balkans. M. Pashitch had known better than to rejoice at this apostasy by proxy made by the Bulgarian Sovereign: he appreciated it at its real worth, and his frank, honest nature recoiled from the hypocrisy which it embodied.

M. Pashitch had also had his dreams, and these included the establishment of a Balkan confederation, united in the same manner as the different German principalities, so that together they could withstand their common foe, Turkey, and live out their destiny inde-

Effacing the Shadow

pendent of any European protection. He was a Slav, and as such he naturally sympathised with Russia, but though he admitted that the latter ought to feel herself at home among her co-religionaries in the Near East, and that their policy ought to be guided by hers, yet he objected to her interference in matters where inner politics were in question.

He was far too clever not to realise that the Karageorgevitch dynasty had a good deal to do before it could hope to be admitted on a footing of equality with the other reigning houses of Europe. There was an unpleasant suspicion in some quarters that it had not been entirely ignorant of the plot that had ended with the assassination of the luckless King Alexander and of his Queen Draga, and, though it was quite unmerited, it made people look askance at the dynasty. M. Pashitch felt this keenly, and, though he would never have admitted the fact openly, his sense of patriotism fretted under it, and he applied himself to efface this shadow which seemed to follow the house of Karageorgevitch wherever any of its members showed themselves beyond the frontiers of their own country. He knew that time alone could cure the trouble, and, clever and far-seeing as he was, he understood at once that it required much personal prestige on the part of its Monarch if it were to be banished definitely.

One of his first cares when discussing the general situation with the new King was to draw Peter's attention to the necessity of obliging his sons to perfect their

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education, so that in time they could become distinguished men. He reckoned already on the possibility of an alliance between the future holder of the crown of Servia and a princess of Romanoff blood. The matter seemed outside the limits of expectancy then, but M. Pashitch knew better than anyone that opinions change as events develop themselves, and that there always arrives a moment when the person who has known how to wait gets, if not all he wants, at least something very akin to it.

If this dream, which might change so much in Servia by the importance it would attain in Europe, were to be realised at all, it was indispensable that the young man who was to become the suitor should possess personal advantages of education, intellect and outward appearance which alone could allow him to pretend to such a future. M. Pashitch, therefore, told the King that, in spite of the seventeen and eighteen years of his two sons, it was necessary to submit them to a new course of training which would better fit them for the exalted position that by a freak of destiny had become theirs.

Peter I. was a wise man in his generation, and, besides, was guided at that time—though, I believe, that their relations have since become rather strained for reasons I need not enter into here—by his father-in-law, Prince Nicholas of Montenegro, an acute and far-seeing Sovereign. He immediately entered into the views of M. Pashitch, and put his sons under a severe discipline, which, however, did not bear the fruits that he had expected in regard to his heir, Prince George. When

King Peter and the Tsar

the latter, however, had been persuaded to give up his rights to the crown to his younger brother, the King began to breathe freely once more, and as about that time his only daughter—thanks to the united diplomacy of M. Hartwig and M. Pashitch—had been given in marriage to a cousin of the Tsar, he could afford to look upon the future with more equanimity than had been the case ever since he had accepted the succession. He paid several visits to Petrograd, and every time met with a warm reception from the public, as well as from the Imperial Family, until at last even the Liberal Press—that had taken care always to remind its readers of the circumstances under which the Karageorgevitches had been able to ascend to the throne of Servia—began, on the contrary, to represent King Peter as a supporter of Russian influence in the Balkans. This change was certainly due greatly to the wise manner in which M. Pashitch, whether in or out of office, had applied himself to prove to the public that, whatever events had accompanied the election of King Peter to the crown which his ancestors had borne in past times, these had nothing to do with his person.

The Monarch himself was heartily glad to find that as time went on the prejudices which had existed against him at the Court of the Tsar were beginning to fade away. He was already an old man, very broken in health, and he felt that he would not be able for long to stand the strain which was inseparable from guiding an unruly nation. He had great confidence in his son Alexander,

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and the young man justified it entirely. The present Crown Prince, though not gifted with a physique capable of appealing to the imagination of a young girl who had had no opportunity to discern his really excellent and brilliant qualities, has a strong personality, and has achieved for himself considerable popularity, not only among his immediate surroundings, but also in his country and in the army, where he is literally worshipped. Apart from his genuine military skill, he has contrived to impress his soldiers with the conviction that so long as he remains at their head nothing very evil can befall them.

During the two Balkan Wars, and later on during the present campaign, Prince Alexander has shared all the privations and all the hardships of his men, sleeping in the open with them, going sometimes without food when they had none, partaking with them of the meagre comforts which they could obtain, bearing himself like any other officer would have done, and accessible to all those who had something to ask him or who wanted to exchange opinions concerning the dangers of the situation in which Servia has been drawn by a concourse of circumstances it would not have been possible for any human comprehension to foresee. He distributed almost the whole of his income to his troops or to the needy population of Servia, declared that he did not want anything more but what they had for his personal wants, and refused to avail himself of any of the advantages of his position as heir to the throne.

Prince Alexander at Petrograd

King Peter, acting on the advice of his doctors, who told him his health could not stand the strain of the leadership of public affairs at such an anxious time, had invested Prince Alexander with the functions of Regent, which he filled to the general satisfaction, and in which he displayed considerable tact. His telegram to the Tsar, sent when the Austrian ultimatum was presented to Servia, is still remembered with pride by Prince Alexander's future subjects, who consider it as a worthy way of meeting a blow delivered by an unscrupulous enemy. Its terms, which were entirely composed by the Crown Prince, are both respectful and dignified, and could not but have appealed to the generous feelings of Nicholas II.

At the time of the previous visit of Prince Alexander to Russia the Tsar had been favourably impressed by the attitude of the heir to the Servian throne. The young man had pleased him by his simple, unostentatious manners and by the unaffected way in which he had replied to the various questions which had been put to him concerning his country and the prowess of his army during the recent war. His modesty when relating deeds to which everyone knew he had contributed, and the perfect indifference with which he rejected every praise that was offered to him, could not fail to appeal to the Russian Sovereign's heart; and when M. Pashitch timidly mentioned as a possibility a second alliance between the house of Romanoff and that of Karageorgevitch he was not discouraged, though at the same time he was told that the Tsar meant that his daughters should be left

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entirely free to do what they liked in the matter of their marriage, and that the only thing which he could say was that if the Crown Prince of Servia succeeded in winning the heart of one of the Grand Duchesses, he should not offer any objection on his side. The hint would have been more than enough had the young Grand Duchess Olga or her sister Tatiana looked upon "Rodrigue with the eyes of Chimène," to quote the famous verses of old Corneille. This was not the case, however, and Prince Alexander, who was not devoid of the keen sense of guessing the feelings of others in regard to himself—which was also a strong feature in M. Pashitch's character—wisely kept silent, and left Petrograd without having betrayed the hopes which had been the prime motive of his visit.

That old and experienced politician, the Servian Prime Minister, was not far wrong in his belief that things and opinions change. The present war has considerably increased the prestige of King Peter's heir, and it is quite possible that the young lady who would have preferred him to have a Greek nose and blue eyes instead of his dark complexion and sharp profile will come to think that, after all, physical appearance has little to do with the actual moral worth of a man. Chastened by the cruel experience of all the sad sights which have met her eyes in the hospitals to which she has been an angel of mercy in the days of her nation's sorrow, she will understand that a young fellow capable of renouncing all the pleasures of his age and all the privileges of his

Servian Troubles

position in order to share the hard life of the soldiers under his command, deserves more than a passing glance.

Servia will require years of self-sacrifice before she will be able to overcome the disasters that have fallen upon her. Her soil is devastated, sickness has made terrible havoc among her population, her fields have remained uncultivated, her towns have been burned, the majority of her masculine population has perished on the battle-field, and there is not one home left in the whole of her territory that has not suffered in some shape or other from the horrors of this war, which was imposed upon her without any necessity, and after she had done all that lay within her power, compatible with her national dignity, to avoid. And, if I read aright, she will still have further Balkan troubles to face.

The King and Queen who will have to rule Servia after peace is once more restored to her will not find it easy work. It will be a noble mission, and it is to be hoped that the Crown Prince Alexander will be lucky enough to find a wife worthy of him, whose help and sympathy will give him strength to fulfil the onerous duties that in the course of time will fall upon his shoulders.

Poor little Servia deserves to be rewarded for the splendid examples of patriotism and self-sacrifice which she has given to the world. She is among the weakest of the nations engaged in the terrific struggle which is shaking Europe, and as such deserves the most sympathy. Her population has shown itself heroic, her King and his

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heir, too, have shown themselves of heroic mould, and her statesmen, by their remarkable faculties and keen knowledge of her requirements, have, at all events, proved themselves far superior to either Austrian or German diplomats.

Every traveller in the Near East who visits that part of the world with the intention to acquaint himself with the character of its inhabitants is astonished to find the intensity of interest which exists in Servia, as well as in Roumania and in Bulgaria, concerning politics. In so many States local interests absorb public attention to the exclusion of outside affairs. In the Balkans it is the contrary. People feel there that their existence depends much more on what goes on in the rest of Europe than on what happens among themselves. They know very well that almost all the great wars of recent times have had their origin in the complications which have arisen over Balkan affairs, and that, rightly or wrongly, their movements have been followed with the keenest attention by all the chancelleries of Europe, who have tried to find in them pretexts for quarrels it would perhaps have been difficult otherwise to provoke. Bulgaria, for instance, ever since her erection into a principality, has caused much annoyance to the world. It required such a man of strength and decision as Prince Ferdinand of Coburg to bring back an approach to tranquillity in this land of unexpected political surprises.

Prince Alexander of Battenberg, who had been chosen to rule Bulgaria after the Congress of Berlin had sanc-

Prince Alexander of Battenberg

tioned her deliverance from under the Turkish yoke, had been elected with the consent of the Great Powers, and had expected to maintain himself at Sofia without difficulty. Things had turned out differently, partly because he had attempted too soon to procure for his new principality an independence it was not yet ready to enjoy; and he found himself compelled to abandon not only the attempt, but also the ephemeral throne he had accepted without realising the problem it would prove to maintain himself upon it. His departure had left the field free to the intrigues of all the different parties which had formed themselves at Sofia as soon as the town had become a capital. For a long time these parties could not agree as to the choice of a successor to Prince Alexander, and at last, when they had found a candidate willing to run the chance of being overturned by a plot of some kind, it was Europe who objected and who refused to acknowledge Prince Ferdinand of Coburg as the ruler of Bulgaria.

Prince Ferdinand, however, was not of the character to allow obstacles to stop him. He had in him far more cuteness than the world had ever given him credit for, and also far more natural cleverness, combined with an excellent education and considerable knowledge, which he had taken good care not to air before the world.

He had the reputation of being very effeminate, and delighted in it, persuaded, as he felt, that it was far more advantageous to pass for a fool than to be credited with an amount of intelligence one did not in reality possess.

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His mother, Princess Clementine of Bourbon-Orleans, whose favourite he was, was a remarkable woman, and one of the most intriguing princesses in Europe. A daughter of Louis Philippe, she had inherited the spirit of opportunism which had at all times distinguished the Orleans family. She was bigoted in a certain sense, but at the same time looked upon religion as a means more than as a conviction. She was upon very friendly terms with the Jesuits, though she took care never to take a Jesuit for her confessor. She considered her conscience as quite a personal property, and, different in that from most pious Catholics, she would never have dreamt of allowing a priest to guide her in matters of public importance. All her life she had been upon bad terms with Fate, who, instead of making her a queen with a wide sphere of activity, had condemned her to be the wife of a prince, very wealthy, it is true, but of no importance whatever in the world. She had tried hard to intrigue in favour of her cousin, the Comte de Paris, but had been promptly asked by him not to indulge in drawing-room conspiracies, which were entirely repugnant to his straightforward and timid nature. The old lady had retreated in high dudgeon, and declared that henceforward she washed her hands of her nephew's welfare, and that the considerable portion of her ample fortune which she meant to leave him as the head of her father's house would be disposed of in a different way.

The Comte de Paris shrugged his shoulders and did not reply to this threat. He did not want his aunt's

Princess Clementine of Bourbon-Orleans

money, and was very much afraid of her political activity. The Princess Clementine, deceived in her hope of having some part in the ruling of her native country, returned to her vast Hungarian estates, and refused evermore to see any of her French relatives. Whether the breach would have healed in the natural course of things it is difficult to say. Subsequent events drove away her former animosity toward the pretender to her late father's throne, and she soon smiled upon him again, even going so far as to congratulate herself in the secret recesses of her soul on the want of common sense, as she considered it, of the Comte de Paris in refusing her money. Had he altered his mind her exchequer would have become considerably impoverished, a circumstance that would have materially interfered with the future career of her favourite child, Prince Ferdinand.

The latter had taken good care to keep on the best of terms with his mother, which had not been the case with his two brothers, who, annoyed by the authoritative character of the old lady, had given her to understand they did not mean to be interfered with. They had plenty of money of their own, the eldest, Prince Philip, having inherited the entailed estates of the Kohary branch of the Coburg family in Hungary, whilst the second son, Prince Augustus, had married the daughter of the Emperor of Brazil, Dom Pedro, who had brought to him an immense dowry.

Prince Ferdinand had no expectations whatever except his mother's good will, and he had made it his

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special duty to remain always at her beck and call, to seek her advice continually, and in general to conform himself to her will in everything. He was the most intelligent among her children, and this constituted a strong bond between them, stronger, perhaps, even than they realised themselves. When, therefore, the Prince was sounded by certain political men in Bulgaria as to whether he would consent to assume the reins of the Government in this little unruly, and as it still was at the time, uncivilised country, he at once went to his mother and asked her what she thought about it.

Princess Clementine was delighted. Here at last was the opportunity for which she had been sighing all her life—the possibility, in her old age, to exercise the admirable talent of organisation which she knew that she possessed. She bluntly told her son that he would be a fool if he refused this unique chance which kind Providence offered him to make his name in the world.

This was also Prince Ferdinand's opinion, but he wanted her to say so, and thus to appear as if he were following the lead which she gave him, and not acting of his own accord. He was perfectly aware that his mother, once she had advised him to embark into what many people would have considered in the light of an adventure, would never allow him to give it up, but, on the contrary, would help him with all the influence at her disposal, and with all the money at her command, to maintain himself in a position he fully intended to improve as time progressed.

M. Stambouloff

His expectations were not deceived. Bulgaria welcomed him with effusion, an effusion with which the large sums distributed in alms and presents of all kinds by the Princess Clementine had probably had a good deal to do. He entered at once with considerable zeal into his new duties, and though no European Cabinet had consented to recognise the validity of his election, he did not trouble about it, but with an unequalled assurance proceeded to acquaint them of his assumption of the reins of the Government at Sofia, and did not mind in the very least that he received no reply to his friendly communications.

When he arrived in Bulgaria he found himself confronted by M. Stambouloff, the most formidable personage there, who had considerably helped his candidature in the hope of being allowed to reign in his name, and who deceived himself that Ferdinand was an insignificant princelet whom it would be easy to lead and easier still to frighten. M. Stambouloff, though most unpopular among some parties, was literally worshipped by others, and could boast of a considerable number of adherents ready to obey every injunction he saw fit to give them. He had hated Prince Alexander of Battenberg, in whom he had noticed an independence which did not in the least enter into his programme. He hated Russia still more, and he disliked Austria; and whilst preaching constantly that Bulgaria ought to fight for her entire independence from European control, he meant her only to do so in his favour, and to deliver into his hands the governance of her destiny, which hitherto the Great Powers, signatories

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of the Treaty of Berlin, had exercised. It was not very long before M. Stambouloff found out that he had been entirely mistaken in his appreciation of the character of the Sovereign whom he had given to Bulgaria. Instead of finding himself in the presence of a weak young man, he discovered to his intense astonishment that he had to do with a personage gifted with unusual strength of mind, iron will, and inflexibility of purpose, backed, moreover, by the ferocious affection of a mother who passed for not being over scrupulous as to the means which she employed to attain her ends.

At first M. Stambouloff could hardly believe in the truth of his discovery, then he applied himself to persuade Prince Ferdinand that his only safety lay in trusting himself entirely to his care, and in relying on his experience of Bulgaria and of her population to help him to maintain himself on his throne, in spite of the violent opposition with which his election had been met in Europe.

Prince Ferdinand smiled, but did not accept this generous offer, which he thought far too self-interested to be sincere. He set himself to win the affection of his new subjects; learned their language, tried to adapt himself to their customs, and, in fact, set his personality against that of M. Stambouloff, who somehow found himself thrust aside and in danger of losing his popularity.

It is to be questioned whether Prince Ferdinand would have been able to win so quickly the battle he had made up his mind to fight had he not been backed by the thousands upon thousands which the Princess Clementine

Bulgarian Mannerisms

distributed with such a lavish hand on his behalf. The clever and astute old lady understood to perfection the art of spending money usefully. Stingy in her private life, she surprised even her son by her immense generosity whenever arose the question of helping him in the difficulties of a position she had advised him to accept, and she associated herself with all his plans with an energy that was more than surprising at her advanced age.

One of the first cares of the Princess was to gather round her son a household on whom he could absolutely rely, and then to engage for him the best chef she could discover in Paris. She made him give dinners at which she presided with a grace truly surprising when one considered her reputation of haughtiness and her proud disdain of everybody who was not royal. She smiled at the small incongruities committed during these meals by the uncouth Bulgarian notabilities of those days, and she contrived somehow by her tact, and without ever wounding any one among them, to teach them that peas are not to be eaten with one's knife, and that it is not altogether the thing to drink from the finger-bowl, a performance in which some of these illustrious personages occasionally indulged.

Princess Clementine also cultivated the Bulgarian clergy, and, when talking with its dignitaries, led them to hope that one day her son might enter into the bosom of the Orthodox Church, and that on the whole she thought the arrangement which had been made when Prince Charles of Hohenzollern had been called to the

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throne of Roumania, and which stipulated that any children he might have should be brought up in the religion of his new country, had been an admirable one which might with advantage be imitated in Bulgaria.

The old Princess soon made herself most popular, not only in Sofia but all over Bulgaria, and before long Prince Ferdinand had no more need to be so careful not to wound M. Stambouloff's susceptibilities.

M. Stambouloff, meantime, had become furious. He, the experienced politician, had allowed himself to be taken in by a young man whom he had believed to be a nonentity. This was more than his vanity could bear, and he set himself thinking as to how he could get rid of him. The relations between the disappointed statesman and his Sovereign soon reached an acute state, and Stambouloff, as was reported in Sofia, began to make overtures to Russia with a view to securing the Tsar's permission to recommend the candidature of a Russian Grand Duke to the throne of Bulgaria. Alexander III., however, would not listen to any such proposal. The discovery of this plot did not interfere with the good temper of Prince Ferdinand, who was more amused at it than anything else. Prince Ferdinand knew perfectly well that the days of the Tsar were numbered, and he had his own ideas as to what his future movements would be.

In the meantime, as M. Stambouloff was returning one evening from the club where he had dined, he was waylaid by assassins, who literally butchered him a few steps from his own door.

First Marriage of Ferdinand

With the disappearance from the political scene of M. Stambouloff, the only serious obstacle to the further development of Prince Ferdinand's plans was removed. Henceforward his career was enabled to develop itself smoothly and evenly, notwithstanding a few small incidents which now and then arose to impede its onward progress. In the course of these events he had married the eldest daughter of the Duke of Parma, who had borne him two sons in the first two years of their marriage, and thus assured the future of his dynasty. He then resolved on the first really serious step he had made since his election—a step that was but the forerunner of others not inferior to it in importance—and determined to re-baptise his heir according to the rites of the Greek, or rather the Bulgarian, Orthodox Church.

This difference was a very sensible one, but, as it happened, no one noticed it at the time. A numerous and influential party in Russia welcomed with delight what it imagined was a recognition by Prince Ferdinand of the supremacy of Russia, mixed with the desire to place his family as well as his country under the protection of the Tsar. The latter, when asked to stand godfather to little Prince Boris, graciously consented to the request, and went so far as to send a special representative to attend the ceremony, which was performed with great pomp at Sofia, and the Slavophil Press hailed the return of Bulgaria into the arms of Russia.

Prince Ferdinand came to Moscow at the time of the coronation of Nicholas II. to express his thanks for the

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restoration of his country and of his dynasty into the favour of the great White Tsar, but, notwithstanding, he was not received with any enthusiasm, a fact that troubled him but little, for he never allowed the numerous snubs he received to influence the equanimity with which Nature and a kind Providence had endowed him. Nevertheless, he contrived to gather a considerable amount of information during his stay in Russia, and he judged Russian statesmen as being infinitely inferior to himself in the matter of political perspicacity, as indeed they were.

The next time Prince Ferdinand returned to Russia it was with the Princess, whose charm he trusted would win him a warmer welcome than he had received during his first visit, and thereafter vanished from the horizon so far as foreign visits were concerned. Instead, he applied himself to the development of the resources of his country, and occupied his leisure in building for himself on the shores of the Black Sea a fairy-like palace, to the embellishment of which he devoted considerable time and thought. At the same time he managed to keep himself very well acquainted with all that was going on in the Balkan Peninsula, and to foment dissatisfaction against Turkey in Roumelia.

Ferdinand of Bulgaria soon acquired the reputation of being a conscientious Sovereign and a wise ruler who would not risk any adventure capable of disturbing the tranquillity and the peace of Europe. He maintained excellent relations with his neighbours, and altogether



FERDINAND I.
Tsar of Bulgaria



Ferdinand Becomes King

played his cards so well that no one suspected he was all the while working toward the destruction of Russian influence in his dominions, and thinking about the day when he would be able to have himself proclaimed, first, King of Bulgaria, and, later, Emperor of the Near East.

When Roumelia revolted against the Sultan and asked to be incorporated with Bulgaria, Prince Ferdinand directed this revolution so cunningly that it was accepted as a matter of course by the whole of Europe, and, furthermore, was congratulated on his success. He had by that time won for himself, if not the affection, at least the respect of his brother sovereigns, and later on, when he, by another piece of clever diplomacy, was hailed by his subjects as King of Bulgaria, he did not find a single dissentient voice among the European Powers.

The Princess Clementine was dead by that time, having left Ferdinand all that she could dispose out of her immense fortune. The King had also lost his wife, that sweet Princess Louise whose existence, rumour would have it, he had considerably embittered. In time he sought another consort. Here again he was guided by that unfailing tact which helped him to surmount so many difficulties and to come out of so many unpleasant situations to his honour. The Princess Eléonore of Reuss, who consented to share with him the responsibilities of a position which was not yet entirely secured, was a woman of great intelligence and nobility of character. Without her it would have been difficult for him to pass through the trials that at last beset him

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when he committed the first mistake in his political life and after the success of the first Balkan War—which he had fought against Turkey side by side with Servia and Greece—turned against his allies of the day before and led his army toward the fiasco in which the independence of Bulgaria, which had been acquired with such efforts, nearly foundered and perished.

It is difficult to understand how a politician of the experience of King Ferdinand could be led into such an error. The fact is that for once he had not followed his own instincts, and in his desire to rule in Constantinople he had allowed himself to listen to the advice of Austria, who, desirous as she had always been to bring about complications in the path of Russia and to put barriers in the way of the latter's legitimate ambition to obtain free access to the Dardanelles, had plotted to set a rival to her in the person of King Ferdinand, to whom she promised help which she refused to him when he wanted it the most, compelling him thus to accept the disastrous conditions imposed upon him by the treaty concluded in Bucharest.

Out of this cruel experience the Bulgarian Sovereign emerged a sadder, and let us hope a wiser, man. He has not, however, given up his old grudge against Russia, and, if what rumour whispers is true, he may yet risk for the second time the future of his dynasty. Were he to make such an attempt—and it seems highly probable—it is freely believed that he would have the backing of certain other European Powers, and that the lure which

Ferdinand's High Ambition

is so attractive to his eyes, the crown of Islam, is being dangled before his ambitious vision.

But, with all his defects, it cannot be denied that King Ferdinand is a statesman; not too rigid in his conscience, perhaps; mistaken in his appreciations sometimes; but a statesman all the same, and, so far as we have seen, the only one Bulgaria possesses at the present moment.

V

BELGIUM AND GREECE

IT seems to me that the country who fought so long for her liberty and the one who is fighting for it at the present moment can well be mentioned together, notwithstanding the distance which separates them on the map. One of them has been celebrated by Byron in some of his most enthusiastic and pathetic poems; the other will find writers in the future to tell her nobly tragic story. Greece had Canaris to fight for her, and Belgium gave birth to thousands of unknown heroes who have suffered and endured a real martyrdom in order to guard her rights against an unscrupulous and arrogant invader.

King Leopold I. of Belgium was an exceedingly astute and capable Monarch whose influence in the matter of politics stretched far outside his own little kingdom. The correspondence of Queen Victoria has revealed to us the real character of that beloved uncle of hers whom she trusted and respected so much. He was a kind of Nestor among Monarchs, whose advice was always sound, because he never gave it in a hurry, and because he had acquired more experience than most men of his time. Had he lived it is to be questioned whether the expan-

Baron Nothomb

sion of Prussia at the expense of all other nations would have been tolerated.

Leopold I. founded a school of politicians the achievements of which, if ever published, would furnish many interesting and unknown details concerning the politics of the last half of the nineteenth century. It is sufficient to mention such men as Baron Nothomb, who, after having played a most important part in the recognition of Belgian independence, represented his country with such distinction in Berlin for something like forty years, and was the only statesman whom Prince Bismarck not only feared, but condescended to consult upon more than one occasion.

Baron Nothomb, in the numerous detailed reports that he used to address to his Government, clearly described his understanding of the policy pursued by Prussia. The Belgian Ambassador was not an admirer of that policy, the shallowness and cruel selfishness of which he appreciated at its proper value. Long before anyone else suspected it in Europe, he saw the danger that the hegemony of Prussia would represent one day to the whole of the world, and more than once Baron Nothomb expressed himself with foreboding and emphasis on the subject. Unfortunately, he was powerless to do aught else but signify the apprehensions with which his mind was filled; but if ever his letters see the light of day more than one passage would sound prophetic of the evil he was the only one to see coming from afar and which he would have done much to be able to avert.

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In a private communication to a personal friend of his, written in 1875, he expressed himself in the following terms concerning the preponderance of Germany : “ It is very much to be regretted that there was not one nation in the whole of Europe who, after Sedan, was courageous enough to oblige Prussia to conclude peace with France. This one thing alone would have prevented the grouping of Germany into one vast Empire, or, at least, would have delayed this disastrous event. I call it disastrous because the whole course of history has proved to us that a great and united Germany would be the source of the most terrible danger that has ever assailed the world. One must not forget that the German, in spite of all his cleverness, his industry, and the perseverance of his character—which qualities no one can deny to him—is not a civilised being in the sense of being able to carry civilisation anywhere else. He assimilates to himself and eventually improves on the discoveries and progresses started by other people ; he has never been able to initiate. There is about him a good deal left of that savagery which distinguished the Teuton hordes who assailed the Roman Empire, and it will require many more years than I would care to count to rid him of it.

“ The great work performed by Prince Bismarck is far from being complete, and, unfortunately, there will be no one after him to perfect it. He will only find many imitators, who, in their desire to copy him, will destroy all that he has done, because he has done nothing really good, though he may have done much that was

M. Frère Orban

great.” I give here the original French, which expresses better than any translation can the real meaning of the writer: “*Il n’a rien fait de vraiment bien, quoiqu’il ait fait beaucoup de choses qui sont grandes.*”

Baron Nothomb was not the only Belgian diplomat who felt distrustful of Prussia. M. Frère Orban, too, the great Minister of Leopold II., before whom even that enterprising Monarch felt cowed, and with whom he did not care to have any differences of opinion, was heard more than once to express his fears concerning a possible aggression of Germany on Belgium in case of a war with France. It was well known that such an aggression had been contemplated in 1870, and had been finally given up owing to the prudence of Prince Bismarck, who overruled the influence of the military party, and also on account of the strong opposition of the Crown Prince Frederick, who put forward as a reason to abstain from such a treacherous intention that England and Queen Victoria would most certainly oppose such a step—if necessary, by the strength of arms. Germany at that time was not intoxicated with her past successes, and even the venturesome and enterprising mind of Prince Bismarck recoiled before such a flagrant violation of solemn treaties. Belgium was not invaded, and France having been beaten all the same, German public opinion did not regret that its reputation for honesty had not been impaired by such a circumstance.

But the idea that, in case of another war, the neutrality of this brave little country was bound to perish

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had got hold of the German mind. As years went on an increasing number of people in Berlin, as well as in Dresden, Munich and other large German towns, discussed the idea in an academical sort of manner, and occasionally articles appeared in one or other of the newspapers. Abroad, too, it was openly spoken about, and in Russia especially a fixed idea was implanted that the plan of the German Staff, in case of a second Franco-German war, was to invade Belgium, and fight a way through to Paris. Why such a thing was believed it is impossible to say, but the fact remains that this idea floated through the air long before the likelihood of such a war was even admitted.

In Belgium itself the possibility of such a catastrophe was recognised, and had caused more than one sleepless night to those responsible for the destinies of that country. The only person who had refused to admit its likelihood was Leopold II., who trusted to his personal ability to avert such an event. But when this clever, though perhaps not over saintly, Sovereign passed away, the question of a possible violation of Belgian neutrality had to be discussed between his successor and the latter's Ministers. It was but natural that they should weigh all the pros and cons of such an eventuality. It was also more than natural for them to see whether, in case it really came to pass, they could rely on someone to help them keep secure their political independence. The famous documents which the German Foreign Office published with such alacrity, and from which it tried to

King Albert and His Queen

make out that an aggression against Prussia had been contemplated by Belgium, together with England and France, prove absolutely nothing else than this desire for safety. No man gifted with the slightest amount of common sense can ever say that these documents prove in any way that Belgium nourished evil designs against Germany.

Belgium met her fate bravely and faced it without fear. Every citizen of that heroic little country did his duty, and the conduct of the Royal Family will ever remain an example of nobility. When King Albert succeeded to his uncle people believed him to be a very ordinary young man, content with his position, honest and true, but commonplace, and somewhat phlegmatic like all his ancestors. To tell the truth, no one troubled much about him, or about his Queen, the little Bavarian Princess whom he had married out of love, and with whom he was happy after the manner of the kings in fairy tales. Adversity was to reveal him in all the manly beauty of his character and to make his people realise the qualities of this quiet, unobtrusive man who had made duty his ideal.

King Albert's distinguished parents had imbued him with a strong sense of honour. The Count of Flanders used to tell him that before ever saying "Yes" or "No" to anything he ought to think carefully, and then, once he had made up his mind, to hold to his decision without wavering. "And," used to add that fond father, "you must, above everything else, always take the responsibility

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for your personal actions, and never try to shift it on to other people's shoulders."

The Countess of Flanders, also, had been a remarkable woman, who had unbounded influence over the minds of all her children. She had made a great position at the Belgian Court, and, indeed, among all European royalties. The old German Emperor William I., whom her great beauty had attracted in the days of her youth, had later on been charmed by the dignity of her mind, and liked to invite her to his presence whenever he found an excuse for doing so. Even her brother-in-law, hard Leopold II., who was so tyrannical in regard to the members of his family, treated his sister-in-law with a respect he never showed to anyone else.

The Countess of Flanders, who was by birth a German and a Princess of the House of Hohenzollern, being a cousin of the Emperor William, had so thoroughly identified herself with her husband's country that she hardly ever spoke German, and her household was wholly conducted on Belgian or French lines. She was very talented; used to draw clever sketches, which more than once won prizes at various exhibitions, and was a musician of no mean order. All her children were brought up under her own supervision, and the smallest details of their education were entered into and followed by her with a keen interest that never flagged so long as they remained under her roof. She tried, as she used to say herself, to make them good Christians and good Belgians, leaving to Providence the care of their further fate in life.

M. Emile Vandervelde

Her son had been very much attached to her, and her death was one of the great sorrows of his life.

The world knows the perfect calm with which King Albert chose the path of honour. He led his troops against the enemy with a determination no one who did not know him well had ever expected from him. He did more. He shared their dangers, their privations, all their cruel sufferings, and valiantly fought at their side, always the first there where danger threatened, sinking his royal rank, glad whenever he was treated as any other officer by the soldiers under his command. He led the same rude, hard existence as his men—sleeping together with them in damp trenches, remaining out of doors in the cold and in the rain, encouraging his army by his example and by his words; always keeping high up before them the flag of their country, and telling them never to despair, though everything seemed lost as far as human eyes could see. His conduct has been sublime in its simplicity, and only equalled by that of his noble consort, the courageous Queen Elisabeth, who during those trying days of agony remained at his side, sharing all his anguish and suffering, and participating in all his labours.

When the King called to be one of his Ministers the Socialist, M. Emile Vandervelde, Belgium recognised the democratic tendencies of her Monarch. M. Vandervelde, the politician whose name for such a long time was synonymous of Republicanism, and some say Anarchism, is, perhaps, one of the few men in Europe who have grasped in its extent this problem at which several

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generations of men have already worked without result—the problem of conciliating all the different parties in a country into one great feeling of love for it and for its dynasty. He is the great rehabilitator of Socialism, and he has proved that, if applied according to his personal ideas, it can become one of the most powerful supports of a Monarchy. M. Vandervelde visited Russia two or three years ago, and whilst there came into contact with some of the principal Socialist members of the Duma and of the leaders of the working classes. He was reported not to have been too edified by what he had seen of them.

M. Vandervelde, at whose word all the Socialists of Belgium would rise at once, should he call upon them to do so, is far from having any sympathy for revolution. He is a reformer; not a destroyer of the old and venerable things thanks to which a nation has performed great deeds in the past. He wants progress and civilisation to take the place, not of traditions, but of incompetence. He is essentially a man of his time, who has understood the value of steam, electricity, and all the wonderful discoveries that have transformed the face of the world and opened new and wonderful horizons to its intelligence; and he wants those horizons to widen still further, to unfold to him secrets of conciliating all the various interests which at present are struggling so violently for existence in Europe. M. Vandervelde is a great man in his way, not only a great Belgian. He will leave his impress on the organisation of the Socialist party in his country, and should ever that country win back her inde-

M. Carton de Wiart

pendence, it is certain that by his efforts she will prosper under the rule of a King who will have ceased fearing any attempts of Socialism to overthrow his throne. Nothing draws people together more than suffering and danger borne in common, and after the trials that have befallen them the Belgian people and their King will be united more intimately than ever. Little Belgium has already given to Europe several examples worth following, and she is likely to give it one more: that of a Monarch popular amidst subjects who are mostly Socialists.

Beside these two great men are other figures just as interesting. One is M. Carton de Wiart, whose wife has been one of the victims of German brutality, and who in his desire to be useful to his Sovereign and to his country followed the King and Queen in their exile on the French coast. There are authors like Maeterlinck, and poets like Emile Verhaeren, who have proclaimed their horror of Germany's dark deeds. There are men and women who have sacrificed everything that they held dear to the cause of their native land, and often have I wished I could write the story of all those obscure heroes who, sometimes unknown to themselves, have contributed such beautiful stones to the monument of their beloved country's glory. Others more worthy than I am will perform this task, and tell the English reader of all the wonders that have been performed on the soil of old Flanders, and of ancient Brabant, in these sad years.

Albert I. is still a young man; indeed, this is the age of young personalities. King Constantine of Greece is

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not yet middle-aged, though already his sons and daughters are grown up. Physically Constantine is a fine type of man, bearing a strong resemblance to his mother's family, and with more than one trait of the Romanoffs in his character, as well as in his personal appearance and manners.

He showed from his earliest childhood considerable determination and a strong will that brought him more than once into collision with his father, who on his side was not a man to tolerate the least infringement of his authority. When the then Crown Prince had attained his eighteenth year, on the advice of the old King of Denmark, his grandfather, he was sent to Berlin to study the art of warfare in the ranks of the German Guards. It was hoped that the strict discipline to which he would be subjected would unbend some of the natural stiffness and temper of his obstinacy. The result did not answer to expectations. The young man conformed himself with the utmost exactitude to all that was required of him, and soon became a favourite with his superiors; none of his defects, however, was modified by the severe course of instruction which he underwent, while, on the other hand, his sympathies, which up to that time had rather favoured France, became suddenly German, and he carried away with him from Potsdam a strong admiration for everything that was Prussian, as well as an ardent love for the Prussian Princess whom later on he was to win for his wife. This was not quite what his father and mother had expected; especially the

King George of Greece

latter, who had always retained her Russian inclinations, and to whom the idea of having for her daughter-in-law a German and a Protestant did not appeal in the very least. The King, too, though he had no serious objection to raise to the marriage desired by his heir, would have preferred his choice to have fallen elsewhere. In spite of the efforts of King George and his Queen to hide their real feelings from the new Crown Princess, they did not succeed well enough, and as a consequence the relations of the Duke of Sparta—such was the title of Prince Constantine—with his parents became strained.

At first the coldness was slight, but later on it became more acute, especially after the war with Turkey, in which the Crown Prince's popularity suffered so much that he considered it well to leave the country for a few years. The heir to the throne of the Hellenes was drawn toward the Triple Alliance. It is not surprising, therefore, that he did not care for the French officers who had been called by King George to take over the instruction of the Greek army. He would have preferred the Grecian forces to be trained according to Prussian methods.

After some time the Crown Princess abjured Protestantism and embraced the Orthodox faith, much to the anger of William II., who for some years thereafter would not speak to his sister, and much to the relief of the Greek nation, who did not care for the thought that its future Queen was a heretic. The Crown Princess proved herself a woman of considerable intelligence, far cleverer

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than her mother-in-law, that beloved Queen Olga whose beauty had won for her, together with her unbounded charity, so much popularity in Greece. She had been severely critical of the war with Turkey, which she considered to have been a most foolish enterprise, and she never made a secret of her point of view, which was in direct opposition to that of the King, who never forgave her for her outspoken disapproval. George I. was essentially French and English in his sympathies.

France always attracted King George. He used to spend two months at Aix Les Bains every autumn, where his arrival was always awaited with great impatience, as the brilliance of the season mostly depended upon it. King George was also fond of Paris, where he led the life of a tourist, and, beyond one solemn visit to the Elysée, never appeared anywhere in his official capacity. One could meet him accompanied only by an aide-de-camp strolling on the boulevards or in the Rue de la Paix looking at the shops as any ordinary traveller would do, or dining at some fashionable restaurant, sometimes with a lady friend and sometimes alone. He would finish his evening at a small theatre, where no one beyond the detective appointed to watch over his movements was aware of his real identity. King George enjoyed that kind of life, and always left gay Paris with regret.

This penchant for light amusement on the part of the King always jarred on the serious nature of Prince Constantine. He thought it undignified, not to use a more sweeping expression: and he allowed his father to

Prince Constantine Exiled

see that such was the case. No man cares to be looked at askance by his own children, and it is no wonder, therefore, that George I. and his heir did not get on so well together.

When the Crown Prince had to go into exile he repaired again to Germany and took up his abode in the Castle of Cronberg, which his mother-in-law, the late Empress Frederick, had left to her three youngest daughters, and there applied himself to different studies, military and historical, in order the better to prepare himself for his future duties. He was no longer a boy, but a man with considerable experience of life, and he began to judge objectively certain facts which formerly had appealed to his heart or to his fancies but not to his judgment. Curious as it may seem, this second sojourn in Germany did not widen his sympathies for the Teuton; the brutal side of the German character, that had escaped him before, suddenly became revealed to him. This gave him considerably to think, and he began to observe the country where he had found his accomplished wife with eyes which were not so completely obscured as of old. Constantine has inherited from his Danish ancestry that strong common sense which always distinguished the House. He had very soon taken mental assessment of the moral standard of the Hohenzollerns, and the result of his observations strengthened him in his determination never to go to war with Germany, as it would mean certain defeat.

Acting on this conviction, Prince Constantine showed

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himself extremely prudent in his conduct when at last he was allowed to return to Athens. When the first Balkan War broke out, the Crown Prince did not indulge in unnecessary enthusiasm, and took particular care to let Berlin know that though he sympathised with the reasons that had drawn Greece into the struggle against Turkey, it was not from anti-German feelings, and that, on the contrary, he reckoned on Germany's help to smooth matters when peace would come to be discussed. Still, Constantine showed himself more than cool in his relations with King Ferdinand of Bulgaria, and considerably reserved in regard to Roumania. During the London conference he maintained an active correspondence—through the medium of his wife—with several leading people in Berlin, and managed to convey to the German Government the impression that he would never pursue an aggressive policy in regard to anyone. And at the same time he won for himself a standing popularity in his own country, where the brilliant successes obtained by the army, which he had commanded during the campaign, were attributed to the care which he had given to its instruction.

What would have happened had Greece settled to a quiet and normal existence during the lifetime of the late King it is, of course, difficult to say, and it is likely that the dissension between him and the Crown Prince would not have abated. But King George was struck by the bullet of an assassin in the streets of Salonika, and Constantine became Sovereign of the Hellenes.

Constantine Ascends the Throne

The first feeling of King Constantine was one of passionate regret for the father who had fallen so unexpectedly a victim to political fanaticism. Whatever may be his defects, King Constantine has a warm heart, and his feelings are not lacking in intensity. He mourned sincerely the parent who had been taken away from him in such a tragic manner, and his grief was as genuine as it was deep. Then as time passed he had to map out for himself a political programme and begin seriously to take up the task of governing his country under the difficult circumstances which, in common with the other Balkan states, Greece found herself involved.

The peace of Bucharest, though it met with opposition in some quarters, was on the whole not badly received throughout Greece. It gave her the much-coveted harbour of Kavala, which was a decided victory over Bulgarian ambitions and pretensions, and it secured for her other advantages of no mean importance. The nation had no reason to grumble or to feel dissatisfied, and could afford to wait in patience for developments which were bound to come. It was shortly after this peace had been signed that Greece's principal statesman, M. Venizelos, started on a journey which took him to all the principal European capitals, and which was expected to yield great results not only in his country but also in the whole of Europe.

M. Venizelos is perhaps one of the cleverest Hellenes of his generation. He aspired to follow in the footsteps of Cavour or Bismarck, forgetting that circumstances were different, and that in such a land of surprise

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as the Near East, the news of a Bulgarian-Greek treaty would not strike the public mind as a truly great achievement. In the East everything is possible, which perhaps accounts for the fact that everything that occurs is discounted already in some form or other. Surprise is the last thing one must look for; and yet M. Venizelos wanted to surprise his compatriots as well as Europe. But Europe, though considerably interested in M. Venizelos, treated him simply as the Minister of the small Power which he represented.

In France alone did M. Venizelos receive more attention, and consequently it was toward France that his sympathies leaned. It must not be lost sight of when judging M. Venizelos that his temperament is strongly Oriental, and he is not at ease among people who have been in contact with Western civilisation all their lives.

It is to be feared that two authoritative natures like those of King Constantine and M. Venizelos would never be able to work together for any length of time. M. Venizelos has unquestionable talents, but is too obstinate, perhaps conceited, in his opinions ever to admit himself in the wrong, even where his judgments are manifestly founded on superficial observation.

Statesmen cannot be improvised. The greatest political triumphs of Prince von Bismarck were obtained by him after a long career, during the course of which he had had many disappointments. M. Venizelos forgets this circumstance and believes himself to be a statesman, whereas he is nothing more than a very clever politician.

M. Venizelos

The King understood the difference, and though he rendered full justice to the unmistakable talents of M. Venizelos, he could not sanction a policy that seemed to him to savour of the adventurous, and he did not care to risk his Crown for the sake of what appeared to promise but illusory triumphs. He knew that the existence of the Triple Understanding furnished Germany with a pretext for war, and under the circumstances he could not commit his country to a policy that promised, sooner or later, to plunge Greece into a new struggle at a moment when the nation had not yet recovered from the effects of the last, and when an aggression against Turkey would have resulted in the invasion of Greek territory by Bulgarian forces.

M. Venizelos did not believe in this danger. He only saw a territorial aggrandisement for Greece resulting in her co-operation in the attack on the Dardanelles by the Allies, and he criticised the Sovereign for not then following him on this road. Out of this situation arose the vague gossip that the King allowed himself to be influenced by the Queen and by the heads of the Staff, who, having learned militarism in Berlin, were imbued with Prussian ideas.

These attacks that touched upon his private life incensed the King. He knew, if M. Venizelos did not, that the Greek army was not in a condition to engage in war. M. Venizelos thereafter resigned office as Prime Minister, and King Constantine appealed to an old statesman of considerable experience, M. Gounaris, to

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take over the Government of the country. Difficult as the task appeared, M. Gounaris did not hesitate to accept it. The Chamber was dissolved immediately afterwards, and new elections fixed for the end of June. When they took place the King was at death's door, and the whole interest of the nation remained concentrated around his sick bed. Politics were put aside and lost their interest, and the popularity of Constantine, which wise folk said had been shaken by reason of his conflict with M. Venizelos, once more became considerable. Crowds filled the streets of Athens and gathered around the palace during the days when his life trembled in the balance, and the violence of parties subsided whilst the danger lasted.

Under these circumstances the elections took place far more quietly than could have been hoped or expected; and though M. Venizelos's party obtained a small majority, he did not have the great triumph his partisans had expected. In the meanwhile events proved it would not have been such a wise thing for Greece to have joined in the terrible European conflict. What will be the end of the present conflict between Constantine and one of the most popular Greek statesmen of modern times it is difficult to say, or even to guess. It is to be hoped in the interests of humanity that Greece will refrain from joining in a struggle which has already made so many victims, and in which she can hope to gain nothing that she would not obtain by an attitude of strict neutrality. Yet who can tell? As I have said,

What King Constantine Knows

“everything can happen in the East,” and any moment may see a drastic change in the whole situation.

King Constantine has been charged with being a pro-German. I have failed to see where this pro-Germanism has been exhibited. He knows very well the resources and limits of his country, and understands better even than politicians, who may not be able to form a judgment on military matters, whether it would be possible for Greece to draw the sword at the present moment or whether her honour requires her to do it. If this latter factor came into question, the King is the last man who would hesitate before an attempt to vindicate the honour of his country, even at the cost of heavy sacrifices.

VI

. ITALY

NO country in Europe has occupied public opinion since the beginning of the great war more than Italy. It was generally believed that a good deal depended upon the attitude she would assume in the struggle, and that if she repudiated the Triple Alliance Austria and Germany would certainly find themselves seriously handicapped. In Berlin, as well as in Vienna, considerable uneasiness was felt with regard to this matter, whilst in France great hopes were entertained as to the possibility that Italy might be drawn by her kindred ties with her Latin sister to denounce the treaty which she had accepted at a time when political conditions were so entirely different. The Irredentist party had always been powerful in the Italian Peninsula, and the desire to annex Trieste was growing stronger and stronger as the kingdom developed itself.

The old hatred, too, for Austria had not abated one iota, notwithstanding the fact that an alliance bound the two countries. The genius of such a statesman as Prince Bismarck alone brought about the alliance, which was entirely artificial and reposed on nothing firm or stable. When Austria sent her famous ultimatum to

Italy Resents Being Ignored

Servia, Italy protested and declared that she ought to have been consulted on a step of such unusual gravity. Austria resented these complaints, and recriminations followed.

At this juncture Germany tried to interfere. She considered herself entitled to exercise a serious influence over Italy. Ties of friendship had long bound together the two reigning dynasties, and both the late Emperor Frederick and William II. had always said that they considered themselves at home in Rome. It could not be gainsaid that Germany had proved herself a very useful friend to Italy on more than one occasion. It was only lately that clouds had begun to darken the former intimacy, and the German Foreign Office blamed French intrigues for the change.

So long as Prince Bülow had occupied the post of Ambassador at the Quirinal everything had gone smoothly, but when he removed to the Wilhelmstrasse somehow his tone as German Chancellor was not altogether the same that it had been when he was simply a German Ambassador. To tell the truth, the great affection which Prince Bülow professed to feel for Italy, the land where he had found such a charming and accomplished wife, consisted of little else than words. When he found himself at the head of German foreign affairs he never missed an opportunity of being unpleasant to Italy in a quiet, unobtrusive manner which was intensely disagreeable, but at the same time so courteous and so polite that it was impossible to resent it outwardly. The fact

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of the matter was that Prince Bülow, who was most observant during his tenure of the Embassy at Rome, had realised that the Triple Alliance was not popular in Italy. This had angered him; and he delighted therefore in checkmating Italian diplomacy.

Prince Bülow, however, fell from his high position long before the solidarity of the Triple Alliance was questioned, and after he had gone the relations between Berlin and Rome became appreciably more pleasant. Several interviews took place between the Emperor William and King Victor Emmanuel, which might have led to a renewal of the past intimacy had the German Sovereign not shown himself so overbearing in his demeanour and so exacting as to the manner in which he insisted upon being treated whenever he graced Italian shores with his presence. The Emperor William II. evidently had made up his mind that Italy was somewhat of a vassal to Germany, and that he had the right to enforce his will upon her in insignificant as well as in serious matters. King Victor Emmanuel resented this with all the haughtiness of the old House of Savoy. He waxed indignant at certain slights which were put upon him by the Prussian Monarch—slights still more offensive because, perhaps, they were not intentional.

As interview succeeded upon interview the personal relations between the two rulers became more and more strained, and meanwhile the French Republic kept extending her hand to Italy across the Alps, and the visits which were paid by the President of the French

M. Barrère

Republic in Rome, and by the King and Queen of Italy in Paris, helped to make each country popular with the other. The French Ambassador in Rome, too, M. Barrère, was a clever man who admirably understood how to use every opportunity that presented itself to bring about a renewal of the old ties that had existed between France and Italy. By his tact he rallied around him at the La Palazzo Farnese all the different elements, not of Society, because the great and fashionable world and himself had but few points in common, but of the various political parties then existing and fighting for supremacy in Italy.

In days gone by M. Barrère had been an active member of the Paris Commune, and after the latter had collapsed under the reprisals ordered by M. Thiers, he had left Paris for London, where he spent some years in complete obscurity and relative poverty. At last M. Barrère was allowed to return to France, where, of course, he took up journalism, and very soon made himself a name. He became intimate with Gambetta, and this decided his future career, as by the influence of Gambetta M. Barrère entered diplomacy. He found free scope for his abilities in Rome, and very soon laid the seeds of a future understanding between France and Italy. When the 1914 war broke out he very cleverly made use of these tentative sentiments to bring the Government of King Victor Emmanuel toward active participation in the conflict. The Press listened to M. Barrère and followed his lead very willingly. Here I may be forgiven, perhaps,

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if I mention that the French Government had given M. Barrère a free hand in all that he considered useful or necessary to do, and that very large sums were put at his disposal.

The news that such was the case reached the Palazzo Caffarelli, where the German Embassy was located, and the Ambassador, who at that time was not Prince von Bülow, asked the Wilhelmstrasse to open a substantial credit in his name at a Roman bank. His demand was refused, and he was bitterly censured for having dared to make it. This is a curious fact, and proves how entirely mistaken the German Foreign Office was in regard to the real disposition of Italy in respect to the Triple Alliance, and how badly it had been informed as to the change that was gradually taking place in the public opinion of that country.

When the war between Russia and her northern neighbours broke out it found Italy very uncertain as to what was going to be her share in it. The King personally felt drawn toward the cause of the Allies, and it is no secret that he regretted the ties which bound him to the Austro-German cause. The Queen did not hide her sympathies for Russia, where she had been brought up, and, moreover, was incensed at the unjustifiable aggression against Servia, where her own brother-in-law reigned. It is known that she did her best to persuade her husband to throw in his lot with the Allies, a course which the Italian nation favoured. Victor Emmanuel felt perplexed; he was essentially a prudent man, and

King Victor Emmanuel

being a passionate lover of his country he did not care to engage in any adventure where she might lose all. King Victor Emmanuel has all the characteristics of the valiant Savoy race to which he belongs; an historian who had carefully studied the annals of that House remarked at the beginning of the present war that the King reminded him of that Victor Amédée of Savoy who for such a long time fought against Louis XIV.

The present King is a true descendant of those princes who rose slowly from the humble position of counts of Savoy to the proud one of kings of a united Italy, but he possesses honesty of purpose and sincerity of conviction in a far greater measure than his ancestors. This, added to the spirit of self-sacrifice which has never been absent from his race, led him to assume responsibilities with great firmness whenever he had come to the conclusion that the welfare and the interest of Italy required it.

It has been said that Victor Emmanuel allowed himself to be carried away by an artificial enthusiasm which made him break sacred engagements he ought never to have forgotten. The reproach is unjust—and untrue into the bargain. The present ruler of Italy is the last man to be led away or influenced by the desires of a mob. His austere, calculating character will always weigh carefully the pros and cons of every question; and if in the present case he joined his people in the wave of patriotism that swept over the land, it was not because he was too weak to resist it, but because he had come to the

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conclusion that his duty toward Italy required him to seize the opportunity that had presented itself to accomplish the final unity of the nation under the dynasty of Savoy, and to bring back Trieste and the Trentino to the Mother Country from which they had been separated for such a long time. It was not the eloquence of Signor Gabriele d'Annunzio that influenced the Sovereign; neither did the cries that day and night resounded under the windows and the balconies of the Quirinal decide the King to draw forth his sword. It was simply the conviction that the old Latin proverb contained more truth than it is generally credited with, and for once the *vox populi* of Italy was also the *vox Dei*.

The whole conduct of the Italian Foreign Office at this critical juncture was but an echo of the wishes and desires of the King. He it was who led the first negotiations with Austria from which it was hoped that the calamity of a war might be averted. From the very first day of the crisis he had clearly expressed his intentions and formulated the demands which, according to his personal opinion, Italy could justly make by moral right. He did not seek a quarrel with his neighbours, and he neither played the double game he has been accused of by certain organs of the German and Austrian Press, nor followed the dictates of the extreme Irredentist party, which in reality he despises with all the haughty disdain inherent to his race and to his personal character.

The King is not a monarch likely to obey blindly any mandate the nation might make; he is possessed not only



VICTOR EMMANUEL
King of Italy



The Misunderstandings of William II

of persistence in his personal opinions, but also of a will firm enough to enforce these opinions even when they clash with those of his people. He had done his best to avoid the war, but finding all his efforts had broken against the arrogance of Austria, he had no hesitation in taking up the sword to fight for the future destiny of Italy.

The German Foreign Office had not realised all these facts; did not know them indeed. It had taken its cue from the estimate of Victor Emmanuel's character which had been made by the Emperor William II., who considered him as a young man of no importance. The German Emperor had never understood the undercurrents of strength and of determination that lay hidden under the apparent coldness and timidity of the Italian Sovereign. His own exuberance of manner and of language was so different from the reserve of Emmanuel that it was next to impossible for him to guess that a man might, though he said nothing, still think a good deal, and that the Italian proverb which says *Chi va piano va sano* might be applied with a certain amount of truth to the son of Humbert I. and of Margherita of Savoy.

There was, however, one man who prided himself upon being a keen student of human nature, and who, in the matter of this Italian crisis, had seen farther than the German Emperor and the Berlin Foreign Office. I am thinking of Prince von Bülow. After he had been compelled to abandon his political career, the Prince had

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settled in the Eternal City. He bought one of its loveliest residences, the famous Villa Malta, where amidst the roses, palms and orange trees of his wonderful old gardens he still kept a sharp look out on everything that was going on in the domain of politics, and never relinquished the hope of being called again to fill an important position in his country.

Prince von Bülow pretended to have given up every idea of returning to political life, and assured his friends that he had felt much happier since the day he had abandoned statecraft. Nevertheless, he awaited with a certain impatience some opportunity to make his name heard once more in the world; he assured himself that one day he would be given some fine piece of diplomatic work where his unquestionable intellectual faculties could shine with brilliance.

There are few men in Europe who are such masters in the art of obscuring their real thoughts as Prince von Bülow. With him one cannot even try to guess what he is thinking about, and I verily believe that there are moments when he tries to cheat even himself as to his views in regard to his own future.

The Prince always appears to share the opinion of any with whom he is speaking, even though this may be contrary to what he thinks. For instance, just after the war with Russia broke out he used to frequent the house of a lady who occupied one of the foremost positions in the Society of the Prussian capital. She was a Frenchwoman by birth, and it was but natural that, though

Herr von Flotow

fate had married her to a German, she should have retained some affection for the land of her birth. Prince von Bülow believed that he could obtain certain information which he required in view of the private political campaign he meant to start as soon as he returned to Rome. He therefore called upon her almost every day, and always criticised most bitterly not only the general policy of Germany, but also the Emperor and the conduct of the war from the military point of view. He said quite openly that he did not believe in the many victories upon which the General Staff prided itself, and that he felt sure the campaign just entered upon would end by the defeat of Germany. Whether the people to whom Bülow told all this believed him or not is another matter, but it is probable, nevertheless, that his apparently careless remarks—which in reality were very carefully planned—brought him as reward many things he would never have been able to learn otherwise.

At the time to which I am referring the German Ambassador in Rome was Herr von Flotow, a diplomat of considerable experience, common sense, and culture. He had spent a certain number of years in Paris as Councillor to the German Embassy, and had learned to know French political men and the French temperament rather well. He had been Minister in Brussels for something like two years, if not more, being transferred to Rome in the spring of the year 1913. He soon made friends, thanks to his pleasant manners and to the great amiability of his wife.

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Frau von Flotow, a Russian by birth, before she married von Flotow was the widow of one of the heroes of the Manchurian War, Count Keller, who had fallen bravely during the battle of Liao-yang. Frau von Flotow, who was a very rich woman, opened widely the doors of the Palazzo Caffarelli to Roman Society, and soon created a coterie of clever politicians, artists, writers and musicians, who were all delighted to enjoy her hospitality. The German Embassy became a centre of reunion for Roman Society such as had rarely been the case with a foreign mansion. Ministers and a great many Deputies got into the habit of dropping in for an hour's pleasant chat with the clever wife of the representative of the Emperor William. The German Embassy, indeed, became so popular that the world forgot to take as often as formerly the road leading to the Villa Malta, where Prince and Princess von Bülow used to give solemn receptions, during which the guests felt thankful for the exquisite taste displayed in this superb mansion and that its beautiful works of art helped them to endure the dullness of these entertainments. Prince Bülow did not like this at all; he would have liked to have been the only king in Rome, as he was until the Flotows occupied the Embassy, and he would, doubtless, have felt comforted had events caused their removal to another sphere of activity.

Now, Herr von Flotow had never belonged to the number of people who believed that the Triple Alliance had still many years of life. He had seen through the

Manufacturing Opinion

fallacy of a union between Austrian despotism and Italian love of liberty, and, moreover, had noticed the slow movement which was inspiring Italy with the desire to snatch back Trieste and the province of Trentino. He suspected this movement to be viewed with singularly indulgent eyes by public opinion in France, and was rather alarmed by the aggressive tone which had been adopted by the Press in regard to Germany from the very first days of the war. He would have liked to influence that Press, either by invitations to dinner and lunch, cleverly and tactfully distributed, or by more tangible means. As I think I have already related, he even went so far as to ask his Government to place at his disposal the means to make a useful present to this or to that person whose influence it would have been profitable to see exercised in favour of the Triple Alliance. His demand was received with a scream of horror, and he was told that he ought to feel ashamed of himself for having even dared to suggest it. Herr von Flotow sighed, and, of course, had to submit, but more than once he must have regretted the want of foresight that had made his superiors so utterly indifferent to the possibility of any danger coming from the direction of the Consulta. This blindness was the more extraordinary in that, as a general rule, the Wilhelmstrasse is not so adverse to the use of such concrete arguments in the matter of influencing opinion.

All this took place before the war. When it broke out von Flotow, who had been away on leave, hastened back to Rome with the feeling that he would not be

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able to do anything to prevent Italy from abrogating the Triple Alliance, but at the same time with the determination to keep a serious watch over everything at the Consulta, as well as at the Farnese Palace, where resided his turbulent colleague and diplomatic opponent, M. Barrère.

Prince von Bülow, who would on no account have given up his custom of spending his winters at his Roman villa, followed upon the Ambassador's footsteps, but not immediately. He did not care to expose himself to the intolerable heat which in summer renders the Eternal City so intensely disagreeable; besides, while in Berlin, he wanted to learn how far it would be possible for him to expect being restored to the favour of the Emperor William, who had always refused to speak to him since, more rudely than kindly, he had obliged Bülow to resign office as Chancellor of the Empire.

Prince von Bülow had found Berlin divided between agitation and calm conviction about the war. The country had been very carefully prepared for its probability, and, firm in the belief that it had been treacherously attacked by Russia, Germany was quite determined to see the struggle through to the bitter end. As yet Italy was not publicly discussed, but it needed little acumen to guess that very soon the people would ask what this so-called ally was doing.

Prince von Bülow noted all these symptoms, but said nothing. He spent something like two months in Berlin. Whilst there he succeeded in his long-standing wish, and

Prince Bülow's Secret Mission

contrived at last to meet the Emperor at the house of one of the latter's friends.

The interview between the two men passed off better than could have been expected. Prince von Bülow assumed his most dutiful attitude, whilst the Sovereign, though stiff in his greeting, was persuaded to enter into a conversation in the course of which his former Chancellor touched upon the subject of Italian friendship. He expressed his regret that, as things had turned out, the Italian Press, with the exception perhaps of the *Mattino* of Naples, appeared to be completely inimical to the German alliance. He hinted also at what Herr von Flotow had mentioned as to the advisability of leaving certain funds at the disposal of the occupant of the Palazzo Caffarelli for him to use at his discretion. The Emperor, however, would not at first enter into that line of thought; then suddenly exclaimed that, though it was beneath the dignity of his Ambassador to occupy himself with such things, someone else might do it, and point blank asked Prince von Bülow whether he would not accept the mission to watch privately German interests in Italy.

Nothing could have delighted the Prince more, but he showed nothing of the satisfaction he was experiencing. On the contrary, he expressed himself as being very reluctant to do so. He allowed himself, nevertheless, to be persuaded to try what he could do to conform himself with the views of the Emperor, and agreed, as soon as he had arrived in Rome, to send William II. a report

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telling him what he thought of the situation in regard to the policy the Government of King Victor Emmanuel would be likely to adopt as events developed.

This report was sent, and was soon followed by others, until an undercurrent of mysterious correspondence was established between William II. and his former Chancellor. The situation reminded one of the famous intercommunication conducted by Louis XV. with subordinate agents he disavowed later on, behind the back of his responsible Ministers. Prince von Bülow did not see how lowering to his dignity was the kind of private espionage which he conducted for his master's benefit. The Prince, indeed, holds the opinion that in politics the end justifies the means, and he applied himself with great zeal to the task of proving to his Sovereign that were he only once more to be entrusted with the direction of German affairs in Rome he might dissuade the Italian Government from throwing in its lot with that of the Allies.

The statesmen who ruled at the Consulta, however, proved themselves too clever for Prince von Bülow. So long as they considered him as a private individual who had found Rome a pleasant place to live in, they had not objected to exchange opinions with an apparent frankness which savoured more of politeness than of anything else; but they became far more reserved as soon as they guessed he might still have some official connection with Berlin. The fact was that, clever as he undoubtedly was, Prince Bülow, during the years that he had lived in

Ambassadorial Amenities

retirement, had lost touch with politics, else he would never have deluded himself that he would be able to succeed where others had failed to convert Italy to a complete allegiance to Germany.

Whether the reports of Prince Bülow contained much or little about poor Herr von Flotow is unknown, but it is certain that from the day of Prince Bülow's arrival in Rome (in the autumn of 1914) the position of von Flotow became insecure. He was reproached by Berlin for carelessness in his discernment of a situation which was daily growing more and more complicated, and he was blamed for having failed to counteract the activity displayed by M. Barrère. Very soon the unfortunate Ambassador was advised to ask for a few months' leave to repair his shattered health, which in reality was indifferent, and Prince von Bülow was appointed Ambassador Extraordinary at the Italian Court pending the recovery of Herr von Flotow.

The world wondered; Rome was not overpleased. It was felt that the position of the new envoy of the German Government might not be an easy one. Relations between the Consulta and Vienna were daily becoming more strained, and somehow political men in Italy did not nurse an implicit faith in the ability of Prince von Bülow to dissipate the clouds which were gathering from all directions over the blue sky of Italian diplomacy. King Victor Emmanuel, too, though he received the Prince with his usual politeness, was not at ease with him. The general impression was that Italy did not

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require in her midst at this particular juncture a man who was too clever to be reliable and honest—in the political sense, of course.

The Prince himself had not the slightest doubt of his ability to turn the tide of events in favour of Germany, and it never dawned on him that the demonstrations which began to take place in Italy against Austria shortly after his appointment were dangerous. Prince von Bülow was imbued with the conviction that it would be relatively easy to buy Italy off with a few concessions which Austria might be persuaded to make in order to secure Italian neutrality. He did not believe, either, that the man in the street might interfere, and that a movement, reminding one of the enthusiasm in the days of Garibaldi, was already taking place. He despised the Press and disdained the ardent speeches of men who, like d'Annunzio, were placing the power of their eloquence at the service of the Irredentists, who were clamouring for the possession of Trieste and the other Italian provinces still held by Austria.

It is difficult to explain such a mistake on the part of a man of the undoubted ability of Prince von Bülow, and the fact that it could occur proves how easy it is even for a very clever person to be mistaken.

The head of the Italian Ministry at that time was Signor Salandra, a politician of the old school—prudent, wise, but prejudiced, as are so many of his compatriots. He was, however, very much influenced by his colleague, Baron Sonnino, who held the portfolio of Foreign Affairs,

Baron Sonnino

and who was the moving spirit in the Cabinet. Baron Sonnino was entirely French in his sympathies, and for years had preached the necessity of denouncing the Triple Alliance, which, he asserted, constituted a danger to Italy. It was Baron Sonnino—and this is a circumstance which, I believe, is known to but very few people—who hit upon the idea of engaging d'Annunzio to come to Italy to preach a new crusade, which was to hurl the Peninsula against the Teuton race, in order to help the great Latin sister who had done so much to further the cause of Italian unity in the past.

The idea was a brilliant one; d'Annunzio was invited to return to Italy, where he was greeted with the wildest enthusiasm all over the country. The Italians are the most impressionable people in existence, and soon the echo of d'Annunzio's words aroused in the nation one immense desire to rush against Austria, no matter at what cost. Manifestations took place not only in Rome, but in other large towns of the kingdom, and the King and the Government found themselves in the presence of an expression of the national will that they could not afford to disregard. At this juncture the Cabinet, presided over by Signor Salandra, resigned its functions, and the latter advised the King to appeal to the Chambers to decide who was to lead the affairs of the country. He added that in doing so the Ministers thought that their decision would untie the hands of the Sovereign, leaving him thus the entire responsibility of the future course of events.

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Victor Emmanuel, though prepared in a certain sense for the incident, found himself, nevertheless, considerably embarrassed by it. Personally, he had not yet made up his mind as to the course of action he ought to adopt, and whether it was advisable for himself, in the interests of Italy, to depart from the attitude of strict neutrality he wished to maintain. He was not a partisan of war at any price, and, at all events, would have preferred his Ministers not to abandon him at this particular moment. They had his confidence, and were aware of all that he had already done, and wanted still further to do, to obtain by peaceful means a settlement of the outstanding difficulties with Austria. He also would have liked to see Trieste returned to the Mother Country, but he was cautiously prudent, and he believed that his Ministers were in entire agreement with him on this question, as well as upon others of like interest and importance. It grieved him personally, therefore, to lose their support just when he relied on them more than he had ever done before.

Signor Salandra, in handing over to Victor Emmanuel the resignation of himself and his colleagues, had advised him to call the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Signor Marcora, a politician of vast and varied experience, who understood public opinion better than anyone else in the whole of Italy, and could, therefore, guide him as to its state. The Sovereign acted on this advice, and Signor Marcora was summoned to the Quirinal, where he had several long conferences with the King, the result

Italy's Polite Indifference

of which was that Baron Sonnino was asked to form a new Ministry—or, rather, he and Signor Salandra were invited to resume their functions. Italy had approved of their policy, and Italy expected them to carry it out to the best of their abilities. Whilst all this was going on Prince von Bülow had not remained inactive. He distributed promises all round. The misfortune was that no one believed in these promises, and the only reply that he got was that, if Germany was so sincere in wishing Italy to preserve her neutrality, she ought to cause her faithful ally Austria to consent to the stipulations of the Italian Government.

The representative of William II. at the Court of the Quirinal found himself, however, for once in his life in the presence of a people who would not discuss with him and who offered a polite indifference to all that he said or attempted to say. It seemed that Italy did not want to have anything more to do with him, and wished him to realise this painful but obvious truth. Nevertheless, von Bülow did his best to fight down the ostracism which he found steadily rising against his person as well as against his Government. But, as I have already hinted, he had lost touch with politics. The lightness of his hand had suffered in consequence of his forced inaction, the clearness of his perception had become dimmed, and, besides, he wished far too passionately to succeed to be able to view with unprejudiced eyes all that was going on around him, which others far less clever than he was saw but too clearly.

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Prince von Bülow was received by the King at a time when the crisis had reached its most acute stage, and only then by the desire of the Emperor William, who had telegraphed to Victor Emmanuel asking him as a personal favour to discuss the situation with Prince von Bülow. The interview was a long one, and when he left the Quirinal the Ambassador believed that he had convinced the Sovereign that it was his duty to resist the clamours of his people and to disregard the advice of his Ministers. Prince von Bülow wrote in that sense to Berlin. In reality the King, who had been most courteous to the German diplomat, and had listened to his arguments with the attention that he always brings into everything that he does, had come to the conclusion during this memorable conversation that Germany would never try to influence Austria into making the only concessions capable of satisfying the Italian nation, and that, under such circumstances, the sooner Italy linked her fate with that of the Allies the better it would be for her in the long run. A powerful Austria would mean the undoubted loss of Italian independence, and—who knows?—perhaps the loss of Venice and Milan, which the Habsburgs had coveted ever since they had been compelled to give them up to the House of Savoy, thanks to French intervention and to the determination of the Emperor Napoleon III.

It is here that the supreme ability of Baron Sonnino came in. He did not attempt to interfere between the King and Prince von Bülow; he never objected to the

d'Annunzio and the War

former having a conversation with the latter; he relied absolutely—and this proves what a profound student of human nature he was—on the common sense of Victor Emmanuel, and on his patriotism, feeling quite convinced that it would enable him to discern all the fallacies hidden under the smiles and promises of one of the ablest statesmen of whom Germany can boast.

Baron Sonnino has one great quality: he knows what he wants. From the very day that Germany declared war upon Russia he made up his mind that, whatever might be its result, it would not pass by without bringing some kind of advantage to Italy. In his secret heart the Baron had no special predilection for either of the belligerents about to engage in a fight for the supremacy of their country in Europe. He was just as ready to shake hands with one as the other. All that he wished, all that he was determined to work for, was the achievement of the great work begun by his famous predecessor, Count Cavour, and completed by Garibaldi just as much as by Victor Emmanuel II., the famous “*Re Galantuomo*.”

He was thinking of that work when he authorised d'Annunzio to make the speech that was to set ablaze the fire that had been smouldering for many months already throughout Italy. The Baron knew that it would not have been politic to say the decisive words himself; it would have been hardly possible, indeed, for him to throw the glove in the face of Austria so frankly as the famous novelist did. He had to look to the future.

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Here I must pause to mention another thing that may surprise my readers. Baron Sonnino did not care for a quarrel with Germany, though his soul thirsted after a war with Austria. The thought that he might eventually be glad to have the support of Berlin when it came to the squaring of accounts with the Habsburgs had passed more than once through his subtle Italian mind. He therefore always showed himself most courteous with Prince von Bülow, and even encouraged the latter in the hope that the Consulta would not care to come to an open rupture with the Wilhelmstrasse. His attitude, which was most arrogant with regard to the Austrian Ambassador, appeared more deferential than anything else whenever he had occasion to discuss the situation with the latter's German colleague. Prince von Bülow could find no subject of complaint on this point, and had reason, when all is said and done, to believe that his adjurations not to bring matters to a climax had had some effect on the thoughts of the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs.

This explains to the uninitiated why, even when Italy declared war upon Austria, she carefully abstained from dragging Germany into her quarrel with the Court of Vienna, and though her Ambassador, Signor Bollati, left Berlin almost simultaneously with the departure of Prince von Bülow from Rome, the two statesmen started on their journey home without any demonstrations of hostility against them on the part of the mob; and though the diplomatic relations between the two

Germany Wins a Move

countries were, in appearance at least, broken off, yet they remained officially at peace with each other.

This curious situation was in a certain sense a triumph for the policy of Prince von Bülow. He had not been able, it is true, to avoid a war between Italy and Austria, but he had succeeded in preventing the former from indulging in any brutally hostile act in regard to Germany. This was certainly an advantage of no small importance, if one takes into account that it enabled the Emperor William to use all the forces of his army against France and Russia, and not to send a single regiment against the troops of Victor Emmanuel.

Baron Sonnino did more than that. He expressed to Prince von Bülow his deep regret at the untoward turn which circumstances had taken, and also the hope that, when one would be so far advanced as to begin the discussion of an honourable peace, he might rely on his co-operation to obtain it. To this the former German Chancellor replied by repeated assurances that of course he would be delighted to follow the example of Prince von Bismarck, and in his turn to act as the honest broker in a quarrel which he deplored more than anyone else, because it interfered with the placidity of his own existence, and obliged him to leave for a time his beautiful Roman home and all the delights of the Villa Malta which he loved so much. The two diplomats cordially shook hands with one another before parting, and it remains still a question as to which of the two felt the more satisfied with himself.

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I think that this side of the Italian affair has never been sufficiently noticed before. People think that in joining the Allies Italy has done so against Germany as well as against Austria, but in reality nothing of the kind has taken place. Italy is not at war with Germany; she has never declared war upon Germany; and though Germany has recalled Prince von Bülow, she has not done so in regard to Herr von Flotow, who is still quoted in the diplomatic staff as the Ambassador accredited to Italy, and only considered on leave for reasons of health. One must not forget that Prince von Bülow was only appointed Ambassador Extraordinary pending the recovery of Herr von Flotow, and that, consequently, his recall could not have the same importance as would have had that of the regular German representative at the Italian Court. In the joy that seized Europe at the news that Italy had renounced the Triple Alliance this small but important circumstance was entirely lost sight of, and the Press of the whole world assumed it as a fact that the Emperor William had found himself with one enemy more to fight against.

In the meanwhile nothing of the sort had really occurred. In recalling Prince von Bülow, Germany made a platonic demonstration in favour of the Austrian Government, but did not move one single step farther. When one compares Germany's conduct on this occasion with the alacrity with which she endorsed Austria's quarrel with Russia, and the haste with which she almost substituted herself for her ally in the matter of her differ-

Signor Salandra

ences with the Petrograd Cabinet, going so far as to take in the light of a personal offence the decision of the Tsar to mobilise a part of his troops, one can but wonder at this apparent indifference in a question of infinitely more gravity.

It is not to be doubted for an instant that in the future congress Baron Sonnino will be appointed the principal representative of Italy, and it is just as sure that he will succeed in obtaining for her all the advantages it will be possible for him to snatch from the weakness or the good will of Europe. He is clever enough to hold his own, and he will have the immense advantage of never losing either his temper or his head. Moreover, he is a gentleman of exceedingly refined manners, and with the extreme charm which is so eminently characteristic of the Italian. He may not always be sincere, but he is always amiable, and, after all, it is mostly by the surface that the world judges of men.

I do not feel quite so sure as to whether Signor Salandra will care to represent his country at the congress. For one thing, he is rather shy and not quite so much at his ease as Baron Sonnino, whom nothing and nobody can abash; for another, he would hardly care to leave Rome whilst peace is being discussed. He knows admirably the Italian character, and understands that with its extreme impressionability it is essential always to keep before the eyes of the nation the things one wants it to accept or to refuse. He is hardly a leader of men,

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but he is essentially a leader of opinions, and opinion will have a considerable amount of influence upon the future congress.

It is likely that Italy, even if she beats Austria, will never get all that she wants at the present moment, and neither Baron Sonnino nor Signor Salandra expect that such can be the case. It will, therefore, become necessary to reconcile the people to a disappointment of some kind and to explain to the country that what she will obtain will be infinitely better than what she had wished to have. No one in the whole of Italy will be better able to do so than Signor Salandra, and for this reason it is probable that he will remain in Rome during the whole period that peace negotiations are in progress, and as this will require a considerable time, we need not expect an early change of Government in the Italian Peninsula.

Baron Sonnino, however, will not be able to face alone the heavy task of watching over the interests of his country when the question of settling the various difficulties raised by the war will arise. He will require the help of someone else, and it is difficult to guess whom that someone else will be. There are plenty of politicians in Italy, but a politician alone is not sufficient. There are former Ministers like Signor Luzzatti, for instance, or even present prominent people such as General the Count Cadorna, who by virtue of his military position will most likely be called upon to take part in the labours of the congress; but none of them could have quite the

Duke of Sermoneta

requisite authority to hold as high as would be necessary the flag of Italy. It is within the limits of probability, therefore, that the King will ask some prominent Italian or Roman nobleman to sit by the side of Baron Sonnino and to lend him the support of an ancient name and of a spotless reputation.

I have in mind two personages whose presence amidst the diplomats and statesmen would alone ensure for Italy that respect without which no nation in the world can hope to be listened to. One of them is the head of the illustrious family of Gaetani, the present Duke of Sermoneta, one of the most remarkable men of his generation. He has held with distinction the portfolio of Foreign Affairs, and his unimpeachable honour, great intelligence, immense fortune and high position, together with his blameless character, would at once raise the prestige of Italy at a time when her future destinies would come to be questioned. The Duke, moreover, is married to an Englishwoman, is related to the highest aristocracy in Europe, has some Russo-Polish blood in his veins (through his mother), and, having travelled all over the world, has acquired an experience such as few Italians can boast. Besides this, the authority which gives him the great place that his race has held in the annals of his fatherland ever since it gave Popes to the Church, and in those of modern Italy, will carry great weight.

His father, the learned Duke Michael Angelo, whose commentaries on the works of Dante will have a lasting place in Italian literature, was one of the first to rally

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to the flag of United Italy, having been chosen to carry to Victor Emmanuel in Florence the first welcome of emancipated Rome. This place, so unique thanks to the personality of the man who fills it, would alone be sufficient to make people think well before they would attempt to oppose just claims put forward by the Italian Government. In a congress where the personal and moral value of the men who will take part in it will have as much to do as the military triumphs of the countries they will represent, the Duke of Sermoneta would certainly be one of the most imposing figures.

The other nobleman who might also be called with advantage to the help of Baron Sonnino would be Prince Prospero Colonna, the Syndic, or Mayor, of Rome, an ambitious, enterprising personality, who since his earliest youth has taken a prominent part in Italian politics, and whose devotion to the House of Savoy has never wavered or been questioned. Though relatively a young man, he has gained considerable experience of political life, and has always stood foremost among those who have worked toward economical reforms in his country and who have taken the liveliest interest in the development of social matters, not only in Rome, where his administration as Mayor has brought about many improvements from the municipal point of view, but also all over Italy. He, too, would have the advantage of bearing one of Italy's historical names, one of those which are almost a part of the past glories of that country. He, too, can boast of an irreproachable character and of a high position,

The Man Who Understands

besides being a personal friend of the King. Taking everything into consideration, it is most likely that Signor Salandra, who understands so well what Italy requires and what the Italian people want, will appeal to one, if not both, of the men I have just mentioned to represent their Sovereign during the future congress out of which he hopes that the unity of Italy will emerge stronger and at last complete.

VII

TURKEY

DURING the last war in the Balkans I heard more than one person express his conviction that it would be impossible ever to obtain a permanent peace in Europe so long as Turkey was allowed to drag on her existence. I have never been able to agree with this pious assertion or to desire the annihilation of a nation which, in spite of its abominable government, has many excellent and even attractive characteristics. For one thing, all the picturesqueness of Constantinople would be gone were a European Power to gain possession of the city ; then, and this is more important, the quarrels and discussions to which Turkey has given rise among the diplomatic circles of Europe would only be intensified were the rule of Islam to come to an end. At present Turkey is the cause of many complications by the mere fact of her existence, but, should she ever be destroyed as an independent Power, the division of her spoils would become the pretext for further strife, which would most probably drag on for years.

The neutrality of the Straits or of Constantinople is nothing but a Utopian dream which facts would disperse very soon—too soon for the peace of the world, because

Constantinople in the Balance

every single nation that had helped to establish the neutrality would immediately begin to undermine it. Even St. Sophia could not be given back to the Christian faith without causing bitter and prolonged discussions. The quarrels between Greeks and Latins, that have always had such an influence upon the welfare of the Near East, would begin anew, fiercer than ever, should the old Mosque of Justinian be snatched away from its present owners. The Catholics would claim it, the Orthodox Greeks would put forward their pretensions, and the church would remain a bone of contention for years to come. The hope that the expulsion of the Turk would prove beneficial to the peace of Europe is one of the most forlorn that was ever indulged in. Let us trust, therefore, that the future congress will not lend itself to the overthrow of the Sultan's throne.

The long and cruel reign of Abdul Hamid certainly hastened the dissolution of his Empire, and had he remained longer on the throne it is a question whether Russia would not have at last seized Constantinople, with or without the consent of the other Great Powers, under the pretext that her presence there was required to protect her subjects and her co-religionaries, whose existence was threatened by the tyranny and the avarice of the Sultan. When, however, that remarkable man had at last been removed from the scene of his former cruelties, Turkey began to breathe again.

Sultan Mehmed Réchad, Abdul Hamid's successor, was totally different from him. For the best part of his

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years he had been kept in semi-captivity by his ferocious brother, and this had robbed him of all energy and initiative. Unfortunately for himself and for Turkey, he became the tool of those who had deposed his brother and put him in his place, and who were about as unscrupulous as Orientals can be, which means a good deal. They followed and obliged him to follow an execrable political system, but at the same time it must be conceded that they aroused in Turkey some of her old-time energy, reorganised her armies, and by the alliance with Germany put her upon a footing she had never known before.

I do not mean by that to suggest that this alliance into which they rushed, partly through the intrigues of Enver Pasha, whose stay in Berlin as military attaché in the time of Abdul Hamid had imbued with strong German sympathies, was wise. It certainly added to European complications. Judging matters from their own point of view, however, it must be admitted that it gave them a new lease of life and instilled in them an energy which they had lacked for many years.

Turks have always been excellent diplomats; diplomacy, indeed, is just the kind of exercise that appeals to the subtle Eastern mind. Had they lacked this quality they would never have been able to hold their own during the last hundred years or so, when so often it has seemed as if they were going to collapse. After the war of 1877 with Russia they played a brilliant game against the diplomacy of the whole world, and though they had lost

Turkey's Double Game

Bulgaria, Kars and Batoum by the decisions of the Congress of Berlin, they contrived to retain far more territory than they could have hoped. By their diplomacy they achieved the further triumph of making friends of their erstwhile enemies, for Russia, when she found she could not swallow the Turkish Empire, took it under her protection and showed an unexpected, though an interested, tenderness to her enemy of the day before.

Turkey knew how to make use of this situation in the years that followed, and by playing off one European Power against another managed to rub along pretty comfortably on the whole, continuing to exist simply because no one could agree as to the best way of destroying her.

The Ambassadors representing the Sublime Porte at the various foreign Courts during the last ten years or so have mostly been men of considerable intellectual value, experience, and discernment. For instance, Turkhan Pasha, who was until lately Ambassador in Petrograd, was a man of unusual ability, who understood to a nicety the intricacies of diplomatic life and who had a close acquaintance with the foibles of the leading politicians of Europe. He was exceedingly popular in Russia the whole time he remained there, and had managed to preserve such amicable relations that, even during the grave crisis provoked by the first Balkan war, he kept the sympathies and friendships which he had acquired, and smoothed the susceptibilities of the Russian Foreign Office. He explained to its leader, M. Sazonov, that Turkey did not mean to profit by the complications that

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had arisen, and that she would be content to recover Adrianople. This being granted, Turkey would be willing to conclude with Bulgaria and her allies a treaty which gave them considerable advantages.

Simultaneously, Turkhan Pasha accentuated as much as he could the disunion that immediately after, and even during, the war had sprung up amongst the adversaries of his country. Well-informed people maintain that the influence of the Pasha had a good deal to do with the breaking out of the second Balkan war, during the course of which Turkey recovered all, or nearly all, the territory that had been taken from her. Turkhan Pasha knew King Ferdinand of Bulgaria personally, and unknown and unsuspected by the majority of the public, finally persuaded him to set his ambitions against those of Servia, with the result, as we know, of bringing Bulgaria within two fingers of her definite ruin.

I have been told that the humiliating defeats inflicted by Servia and Greece on her former ally were a source of unmitigated pleasure to Turkhan Pasha. King Ferdinand realised how stupid he had been when he refused to listen to the good advice of those who had told him it would be better to give way to his neighbours and make the concessions upon which they insisted rather than drive them to turn upon him.

In Albania Turkhan Pasha also held his own. After leaving Russia he became the principal Minister in Albania, and amidst the difficulties which he encountered managed to come out unscathed. He lost none of his

Turkhan Pasha

popularity either in Constantinople or amongst the European chancelleries. Even after he had failed to restore order out of chaos nobody blamed him for his want of success. The exceeding difficulty of the Albanian problem was unanimously recognised. Though the Prince of Wied was made the subject of bitter criticism, Turkhan Pasha did not share the blame that was freely lavished upon his so-called Sovereign, and returned to Turkey without having suffered in the least from his perilous adventure.

Turkhan Pasha's personality is one that imposes itself upon the crowds, and I should feel considerably surprised if he were not appointed one of the Turkish plenipotentiaries at the future congress. I do not see anyone better fitted than he to uphold his country, respected and esteemed as he is in Turkey and in Europe. Though a Christian, the Pasha has a goodly share of Oriental fatalism, and is firmly of the conviction that the end of the Ottoman rule at Constantinople is still far distant. He is not a military man, yet he has managed to secure a very clear knowledge of the military resources of Turkey.

These resources are considerably larger than the Press has represented. In the summer of 1915, without the slightest effort, Turkey could put in the field something like thirteen army corps without calling up her reserves. These represent 460 battalions of infantry, forty regiments of cavalry, and twenty-four regiments of irregular cavalry. The artillery numbers thirty-eight regiments, totalling seventy-seven batteries; thirty groups of light

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mountain artillery, and five groups of horse artillery. Each battery has six guns, and the mounted ones four. There are also thirteen regiments of siege artillery, possessing excellent guns (furnished mostly by Krupps), and handled by German officers. It must be added that the guns are absolutely modern, the majority having been acquired since the Balkan War.

The prime mover of the reorganisation of the Turkish army, of course, has been Enver Pasha, who is a curious mixture of European culture, Oriental laziness, and Turkish ferocity and savagery. Had it not been for Enver it is unlikely that the Turkish Government would have occupied themselves with this important question. Enver Pasha saw farther than his colleagues, and either on his own initiative or else in obedience to inspiration received from Berlin, applied all his energies and determination to the work of organising the army.

Whether Enver Pasha was actuated solely by patriotic motives or whether personal ambition had more to do with his efforts it is not for me to say. With all his defects, whenever I think of him and of the extraordinary influence he has managed to acquire—not only over the Sultan, but also over all those with whom he has worked—I cannot help remembering the famous reply of Leonora, who, when she was asked during her trial by what means she had captivated the heart of Marie, Queen of the Medici, and caused her to do her bidding, replied simply: “By means of the influence that every strong nature can acquire over a weaker one.” Enver Pasha is a

Enver Pasha

strong nature, stronger even than credited, and possesses over his colleagues the immense advantage of being cultivated. Even when he returned to Turkey he contrived to keep himself wonderfully well informed upon the advances of science and knowledge.

Enver Pasha is a born organiser, and has established an intelligence system in the Turkish army. It is not generally known that the principal source of information of the German Government in regard to Russian affairs is Turkey; and that most of the espionage in Russia on account of the German General Staff has been the work of men employed under Enver Pasha and instructed by him. The immense industrial movement around the harbour of Odessa, and the constant relations that were entertained between the South of Russia, the Crimea and Bessarabia with Turkey were very useful to the cause of the Austro-Prussian-Turkish alliance. Sellers of sponges, coral, and Turkish delicacies, and the many pedlars who tramped over the southern provinces of the Empire of the Tsar, were mostly spies in the employ of Enver Pasha, and thanks to the carelessness with which people talk in Russia, they obtained far more information than could have been suspected.

In this way particulars of the defences of the Black Sea are known as well, if not better in Constantinople than they are at Petrograd. These particulars have been gathered and great care taken to ensure that the details are accurate, for they lie at the base of a deeply laid scheme for the future march of the troops of William II.

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from the Polish frontier through Brest-Litovsk to Kiev, and thence to Odessa, which, if seized, would be a base whence it would be relatively easy to send reinforcements to Turkey in order to secure for her and her allies the complete mastery of the Black Sea.

In the region of the Caucasus, too, Enver Pasha contrived to make many friends among the Mussulman population, who had ever been restive under Russian rule. He had emissaries who were always moving about, and who, therefore, could give him fairly accurate information regarding the feelings of the inhabitants of those provinces, as well as of the military dispositions for the defence of that region of Russia. The thoroughness of this espionage enabled Enver Pasha to hold his own with a relatively small number of troops from the beginning of the war, and to keep the soldiers of the Tsar sufficiently busy to prevent the Caucasian regiments being used elsewhere.

No one doubts that Enver Pasha will be one of those who will represent Turkey at the peace conference. He would never trust anyone else there, for Enver Pasha never relies on anything or anybody except on himself. He certainly means Turkey to reap some solid advantage when, at last, peace is signed, and he is far too cautious to permit these matters to be discussed without his being present to see it is properly done.

It is likely that another of those who will undertake this task with him will be his personal friend Hakki Bey, who has recently been appointed Ambassador in Berlin.

Hakki Bey

If Turkhan Pasha is inclined to be too modest in his demands, these two certainly will not make any mistakes in that direction.

Hakki Bey is the type of the cautious Oriental who does not say much, but who can wait if he cannot get all he wants at once. He is imbued with the conviction that Islam ought never to yield an inch to the Infidel. In that respect he is absolutely Eastern in his character, in spite of frequent journeys in Europe. In this he is a marked contrast to Enver Pasha. On the other hand, Hakki Bey can be very persuasive in all that he says, and he argues with great talent, even with eloquence, when the occasion requires it. His intransigence might be extremely useful, combined with the diplomatic suavity of Turkhan and the dashing energy of Enver, and in view of this circumstance it is probable that the three men will have to fight together against diplomats whose aim must be to reduce Turkey to an utterly dependent position.

It is said that in spite of the chronic financial straits of Turkey, money for the needs of the army is still forthcoming, thanks to Enver Pasha, by whom loans lately contracted by the Sublime Porte with banks or private individuals have been retained at the War Office, where they remain at the sole disposal of Enver Pasha. Troops have been paid, guns have been bought with ready money, and rifles have been acquired and paid for with solid cash—incidents which had not occurred for something like half a century or so. This fact alone

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would have made Enver Pasha popular even if his energy had not appealed to the imagination of the army, which he treated somewhat after the manner the former Sultans used toward their janissaries—with a mixture of affection and of apparent fear that appealed to military vanity and gave the army a sense of importance to which it had long been a stranger.

Enver Pasha is most certainly popular, not only among soldiers but also in the country. His countrymen feel grateful to him for having made them realise that they could have a voice in affairs of government and the welfare of the Turkish Empire. He has succeeded in the most difficult task of persuading an enslaved nation that it is perfectly free; many people cleverer than Enver Pasha have failed in the attempt.

As I have said earlier in this chapter, I do not believe in the destruction of Turkey as a European Power after the present war. The possibility of taking Constantinople away from her in order to neutralise the Dardanelles may be discussed in the congress; but it will be very quickly recognised that were such a thing done the result would be disastrous. In spite of the present community of interests that have drawn together England, France and Russia, the two former countries will rapidly arrive at the conclusion that it would not do to give Russia either an absolutely free hand in the Near East or supreme control over the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. The best thing for the future peace of Europe will be to leave things as they have been for so many centuries.

The Sheikh-ul-Islam

This might not, after all, be such a risky proceeding as it would have been in the days of Abdul Hamid. Enver Pasha has done one good thing for Turkey: he has almost succeeded in stamping out the wholesale plundering of the Public Exchequer. A new and more honest set of officials now reign who, in the main, are above baksheesh, or, at any rate, fewer are susceptible to bribery.

Among the high functionaries is the present Sheikh-ul-Islam, Haïri Bey, perhaps the most popular personage in Constantinople to-day, and his influence is exceedingly widespread. Were he ever to use it against Enver Pasha, it might prove a source of great trouble to the War Lord of Turkey.

Haïri Bey is not a diplomat, yet he is thoroughly conversant with the different phases through which diplomacy has passed during the last quarter of a century. He is, indeed, one of the shrewdest minds in Constantinople; his whole character a mystery; his secretive powers almost abnormal in their intensity.

When Abdul Hamid was dethroned Haïri Bey affected a surprise that was so well acted that no one could have supposed every detail of the conspiracy was known to him and that he had helped it by every means at his disposal. His outward manners are as humble as his heart is proud; his outward charity as large as his greed for power is intense. Enver Pasha respects the Sheikh and relies on him to support many of his actions which, perhaps, he would not dare to attempt were he

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not covered in his responsibility by the authority of Haïri Bey. In any case, Enver Pasha would not care to incur the opposition of this redoubtable individual, who incarnates in his person all the fanaticism of Islam and who understands to perfection the art of leading men wherever he wishes.

I have sometimes heard people ask whether Turkey possesses any real statesmen. It has always seemed to me that with the sole exception of Turkhan Pasha—who is not a Turk, but an Albanian—and even his statesmanship is erratic, she has no men who could have any pretension to be considered as such. Either through the influence of the Turkish climate or through the fatalism which is inherent to the Mohammedan faith, all her prominent people have been able diplomats or great warriors, but none of them have exhibited what we understand in Europe to be statesmanlike qualities. The Turk can conquer, he can display tact and not less ability, but he cannot govern. The Turk is quite content to “carry on”; he sees progress, but can never apply it to his personal wants or requirements. His fatalism has produced a chronic inertia. Is it, therefore, to be wondered that among such a nation the first man endowed with the qualities that it lacks should rise to prominence and dominance? In a land where statesmen do not exist an adventurous, intriguing, clever and keen mind such as possessed by Enver Pasha was bound to come forward, but whether it will be for good or for evil the future alone will show.

An Imprisoned Statesman

Hakki Pasha is capable of great and grave resolutions, but quite without initiative. He could defend a fortress; he would never be able to build one. The Sultan is a figurehead whom some respect, some despise, and on whom no one relies. In all the vast Ottoman Empire I can find but one individual who truthfully could be designated as a statesman. He is in a prison, and his name is Abdul Hamid.

VIII

GERMANY

EVER since the days of Frederick the Great Germany has almost constantly occupied the attention of the world, but though she has had a number of more than remarkable military men and at least one great statesman, she has never been served by diplomats of supreme ability. In the dark days of the Napoleonic wars Prussia found no one to oppose the French Ministers who acted under the directions of the Prince de Benavente. At the Congress of Vienna not one Prussian managed to get his voice heard, and though, chiefly in deference to the wishes of the Emperor Alexander I. of Russia, Prussia was taken into the councils of the Congress, it is very much to be doubted whether Talleyrand or Lord Castlereagh ever heeded the opinions of their Prussian colleagues. As for the King, Frederick William III., no one took him seriously.

Later on, in the middle of the last century, Prussian diplomacy suffered terrible humiliations at the famous Olmütz Conference, in 1850, when Prince Schwarzenberg forced the Prussian Minister, Baron von Manteuffel, to sign a treaty which reduced his country to the condition of a vassal of the Austrian Empire.

Discovery of Bismarck

Until the accession of William I. Prussia was treated by Europe as a negligible quantity, but with the latter's advent on the political scene in the quality of an independent Sovereign things changed very quickly. The new King was an excellent observer of human nature, and understood to perfection the art of appreciating people at their real value. He was also ambitious to a degree that no one who had known him previous to his coming to the throne had ever suspected. His first care when he had succeeded to his brother was to look out for someone willing to act under his directions and to undertake, with him, the task of elevating Prussia to the position which he believed she deserved to occupy in the European concert.

The King of Prussia discovered the Great Chancellor, then plain Herr von Bismarck Schönhausen, and the magnitude of their mutual achievements need not be retraced here. The facts speak for themselves, and, thanks to the efforts of perhaps the greatest political genius of modern times, Prussia was merged into a united Germany, and so became the leading Power of the Continent.

Prince Bismarck could not bear to have anyone inferior to himself meddling with his actions; he would never suffer another to offer him advice or make suggestions. Even at the beginning of his ministerial career, when he had just assumed the direction of public affairs, he had felt impatient with the people with whom he found himself compelled to associate. When events made

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him a great man whom no one dared to contradict, he became extremely jealous and apprehensive of rivals in the particular sphere of activity which he considered was absolutely his own. He forgot that he was not immortal, and that when he died others would have to take up the work he had conducted so brilliantly up to a point when it seemed that the greatness of Germany could not be further increased. He carefully eliminated from the Foreign Office every man of independent spirit, and with the sole exception of his *alter ego*, Herr von Holstein—the only man to whom he ever opened his mind without reserve—Prince von Bismarck refused to avail himself of the experience of anyone. He treated the Ambassadors that Germany held accredited at foreign Courts with a mixture of disdain and of rudeness that soon obliged them to resign, when they were immediately replaced by nonentities who never looked beyond humbly performing all the orders which they received from the Wilhelmstrasse, and who were so constantly told that they dared not take any personal initiative in anything that they lost it altogether.

Even Prince Henry VII. of Reuss, who was accepted as their equal in birth by all the sovereigns in Europe, and whose wife was a niece of the old Emperor William and a Princess of the Grand Ducal House of Saxe-Weimar, had finally to abandon the Vienna Embassy and to retire into private life. The only man who contrived to maintain himself in his high place, and who always received sincere deference from the formid-

Prince von Stolberg-Wernigerode

able Chancellor, was Prince von Stolberg-Wernigerode, who, by his tact and the independence that his immense fortune and his quasi royal position gave him in regard to everybody, had rendered great services to Prussia in the past, and was to render still greater service in the future, in many important questions concerning home politics.

One of the principles which actuated the conduct of Prince von Bismarck in regard to his subordinates was never to employ any really brilliant man. Only mediocrities were tolerated by the Great Chancellor, with the inevitable result that he created no school, had no imitators, and, when he was turned out of office by a young and energetic Sovereign, there was no one to continue the political system he had inaugurated with such success and carried through with such extraordinary tenacity and luck.

This simple fact contains the key to the present trouble. Had Prince Bismarck still been at the head of affairs it is certain that the war which is waging would never have taken place. He was always against the idea of warfare with Russia; as he explained one day in the Reichstag, to do so would be nothing short of madness. The interest of Germany required her to keep upon good terms with her Russian neighbour; and during the whole time that he remained in office the first Chancellor of the new German Empire had done his very best to cultivate friendly relations with Russia. His one great fear was a Franco-Russian alliance, which

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would constitute, in his opinion, a direct source of danger for the future of Germany ; and he had steadily done his best to counteract all attempts that had been made to bring it about, especially at the beginning of the reign of William II.

The whole aim of the policy of the Great Chancellor had been to put obstacles in the way of a closer union between the Cabinets of Petrograd and of Paris. He would have liked to see the heir to the Russian throne married to a Prussian princess, and he had been deeply disappointed to find that such an alliance could not be arranged.

Bismarck's attitude toward England was derived principally from his antipathy for the Crown Princess Victoria, who later became the Empress Frederick. He accused her of keeping the English Government, through Queen Victoria, her mother, informed as to everything that was being planned or done in Berlin. The reproach was unjust, but the Chancellor, nevertheless, remained convinced that such was the case, and during the years when his relations with the present Kaiser were still intimate he preached to him continually the necessity of keeping England at arm's length, a principle which William II. appropriated and enlarged upon when the object of his particular dislike, King Edward VII., ascended the throne.

At this period Bismarck had already been dead for some years, and the German Foreign Office had already entered into that period of its existence in which its



WILLIAM II.
German Emperor



Mistakes of German Diplomacy

incapacity was to come out in brilliant colours and to end by producing confusion and misfortune. It had had its marvellous epoch of glory ; it was having its day of tinsel. The successors of Bismarck were for the greater part imbued with that German arrogance which believes that it can do everything and can dictate its laws to the whole of the world because it had once conquered a part of it. With few exceptions they were men who, when brought into contact with the really great world, were incapable of holding their own amongst it.

In the course of the last six or eight years German diplomacy has accumulated so many mistakes that I do not think it a libel to call it one of the most incapable in the whole of Europe. It has shown neither political instinct nor political perspicacity ; has attached importance to things that have none at all, and overlooked the really significant events of a nature capable of influencing the future course of German history. It has substituted brutality for tact, and in its desire to assert German supremacy all over the world it has simply rendered Germany so unbearable that, even before the idea of a war with her became familiar to the public, many people wished in the secret of their souls that something would happen to put an end to her arrogance.

As time went on the feeling increased in intensity, and unfortunately for Germany the diplomats and statesmen, instead of trying to work against this current of dissatisfaction, distrust and general dislike which was arising against her everywhere, did their very best to

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intensify it by the insolent and overbearing manner with which they simply swept before them everything and everybody who ventured not to admire indiscriminately all that she did, said, thought or imagined.

The German Foreign Office saw many changes in its chief until the advent of Herr von Jagow, while above him the Chancellor Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg exercised supreme control over Germany's policy abroad. The doctor was no more a diplomat than Herr von Jagow, or Count von Pourtalès in Petrograd, or Baron von Schoen in Paris. All these men, with a touching unanimity, failed to see the seriousness of the situation after the Austrian ultimatum, and, either on purpose or through simple incapacity, aggravated it by the light-hearted manner with which they seemed to treat the whole affair.

The German Chancellor himself proved to be a very novice in the science so dear to the hearts of Talleyrand and of Metternich, and allowed himself to be completely misled by the reports of subordinates who were less clear-sighted even than himself. Prince Bismarek, had he been alive, would have felt himself more than avenged for his arrogant dismissal in watching the many blunders and errors committed by the man occupying the place which he had filled so brilliantly for more than a quarter of a century.

Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg, however, had one great advantage: he was a truthful man, who never hesitated to call a spade a spade, and who sacrificed his reputation

Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg

to his love for sincerity. His famous declaration, repeated by Herr von Jagow, that Germany knew she had committed a crime in not respecting the neutrality of Belgium, was a diplomatic blunder for which both he and Germany will have to pay a heavy price later on. It was so characteristic of German brutality that it proved to those who had not yet noticed the circumstance, that in spite of his charming manners, politeness and knowledge of the world, Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg lacked delicacy, tact and consideration. He blurted out the truth simply because he was proud of the consciousness of the brute force it emphasised. This same feeling has caused the present war to be so brutal—it became so largely because of the clumsiness of the German Foreign Office, which rushed headlong down the course its leaders had made up their minds to follow, without taking the slightest trouble to hide their intentions or to attenuate the crimes committed in the course of the conflict.

In a similar situation to Bethmann-Hollweg, and with the same intention in mind, Bismarck would certainly have manipulated things so that Europe would declare war upon Germany, and have, therefore, proclaimed Europe as the aggressor. Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg contented himself by repeating the lie which had been set afloat by the Press and the Government: that Russia had attacked Germany; an assertion which no one believed, and which only added insult to the many injuries that had been inflicted by Prussia on her neighbours.

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Personally, the German Chancellor is a quiet, serious-looking man who would have made an excellent professor of philosophy or of history at a University, where his conservative views would have kept him in a stage of honest, painstaking mediocrity. He could have taught with success where his pupils were not too inquisitive as to the why and wherefore of things, and would have imbued them with that middle-class spirit which pervades all his actions and which has made him such an excellent official and such a poor statesman. His vision seldom goes beyond the horizon, and he lacks originality to an extent which is sometimes pitiful and mostly amusing. His attitude during the coming congress, if he has not fallen from the favour of the Emperor before then, will be a purely passive one.

Herr von Jagow is quite a different kind of man from his chief. He is a bustling sort of creature, very intriguing, very active, very busy with what does not concern him, and very much convinced as to his personal importance. He is not so frank as Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg, and he tries to be very sharp and very observant, giving himself the airs of a Bismarck in miniature, whose different sayings he is very fond of repeating and quoting, sometimes quite unnecessarily and sometimes quite wrongly.

At the beginning of the European crisis he tried to imitate the Great Chancellor in equivocating and delaying matters in the hope that the conflict might break out before he gave his reply to propositions that might have

The Austrian Ultimatum

helped to avert war. Thus, for instance, when Sir Edward Goschen, on the 27th of July, 1914, communicated to the German Secretary of State the proposal formulated by Sir Edward Grey of a conference of the four great Powers, to which would be submitted the various incidents that had arisen between Austria and Servia, Herr von Jagow hesitated, seemed embarrassed to give an answer to this offer, declared that he had to consult the Chancellor, and at last managed to delay this answer until the beginning of the war rendered it useless.

In doing so he imagined he was very clever. In reality his conduct only emphasised the very fact which he had always denied: that of Germany's intention to go to war, *coûte que coûte*. It was a piteous, a stupid, and an underhand procedure which nothing justified, and which in some details was so naïve that one could only smile had the whole matter not been so terribly serious. How can one, for instance, qualify the remark of this would-be Richelieu to the French Ambassador, M. Cambon, when on the 27th of July, answering the latter's observation that the Servian reply to the Austrian ultimatum was an entirely satisfactory one, he merely said that he had not had time yet to acquaint himself with the contents of this reply, that had been, it must not be forgotten, handed to the Austrian Minister in Belgrade on the 25th of July—two days earlier? One can only wonder whether in making it Herr von Jagow wanted to amuse himself at M. Cambon's expense or whether he was taking him for a fool.

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Such conduct proves to what extent German diplomacy had degenerated since the days of Bismarck. One can imagine what a singular part Germany will play at a congress if her only representatives are of such poor calibre. Dismissing, then, Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg and Herr von Jagow, one can only remember Prince Lichnowsky and Baron von Tschirsky as diplomats who could defend her interests with any chance of success.

The Prince is far too grand to consent for a second time to run the chance of being duped by the Wilhelmstrasse as to its real intentions, as he most undoubtedly was last year in London. Baron von Tschirsky, though extremely clever, is not popular either in Court circles in Berlin, or among his colleagues, or with his immediate superiors. As an Ambassador he has shown more discrimination than most of his colleagues, and though his conduct in Vienna since the murder of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand could be criticised in most severe terms, yet it must be acknowledged that he admirably fulfilled the task that he had been set to accomplish : that of driving Austria to be the apparent cause of the war. Sir Maurice de Bunsen was perfectly right in concluding from the conduct of Baron von Tschirsky, and especially from his repeated and persistent refusal to join his efforts to those of the other Foreign Ambassadors at Vienna in seeking a peaceful solution, that from the very outset of the crisis his attention had been entirely directed to securing an open rupture between Austria and Russia, and in this way afford Germany the opportunity she had

Count Berchtold is Afraid

been seeking to start hostilities. That he did not even think it necessary to consult Austria about her own affairs is seen by the following incident. When M. Sazonov asked the Austrian Government simply to eliminate from its ultimatum all the points that touched upon the sovereign rights of Servia as an independent kingdom, in return for which Russia declared herself ready to stop her military preparations, Herr von Jagow refused even to transmit this offer to Vienna, and dismissed it curtly with the remark that it was entirely unacceptable and beneath the dignity of the Austro-Hungarian Government to consider.

I have heard from a source that I have reason to think well informed, that even Count Berchtold was overwhelmed by the responsibility which Austria, backed by Germany, was taking upon her shoulders. Only at last he allowed himself to be half convinced by the representations which were made to him from London, Paris, and Rome, that it would be well to make an effort to meet Russia half-way, and had consequently authorised the Austrian Ambassador in Petrograd, Count Szapary, to open once more the negotiations that had been abandoned between him and M. Sazonov.

When the fact was communicated to Baron von Tschirsky, he protested with unstinted vehemence against such "criminal weakness," as he termed it, and hastened to inform Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg of the "pusillanimity" of the Ball Platz. It seems that it was after the reception of his dispatch upon the subject that Baron

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von Schoen in Paris, and Count von Pourtalès in Petrograd, were instructed to present the two ultimatums by the means of which Germany at last unmasked her batteries in the clumsy way which has seemed inseparable to every step taken by her diplomats.

It is much to be regretted that when the complications that brought about the war broke out, Prince Radolin was no longer at the Paris Embassy, having already retired from public life. Prince Radolin was a diplomat of the old school, who had studied under Prince von Bismarck, and indeed had been among the few favourites of the late Chancellor. He was a man with considerable experience, an excellent knowledge of foreign politics, and owing to his Polish extraction devoid of Prussian arrogance. Prince Radolin might—I do not say he would—have found a means of conciliation which, if it had not prevented the war, would at least have circumscribed it within certain limits. He was liked in Paris, where he had many relatives on his wife's side, the Princess Radolin's mother having been the daughter of Alexandre de Talleyrand-Périgord, Duke of Dino.

Prince Radolin would most certainly have softened the tone of the demands formulated by Berlin, and met half-way any overtures that might have been made to him by the French Government in the cause of peace. He was trusted by the statesmen of Europe, and that in itself was a great thing.

Baron von Schoen, on the other hand, was not a

Baron von Schoen

persona grata in French political circles nor in French Society, and, moreover, had acquired during his short tenure of the Foreign Office in Berlin the reputation of understanding far more of the rules of tennis than of the intricacies of politics. The Baron's strong German accent, too, predisposed people against him.

During the period the preludes of the great drama that was to shake the world were being played the conduct of Baron von Schoen was singular. It seemed as though he had received instructions to do all that he could to get himself insulted by the Parisian mob in order that the contretemps could be construed as a *casus belli*, and so excuse an immediate attack upon France at a time when she was unprepared for unexpected aggression. It is to the honour of Paris that throughout this painful time it preserved an attitude of perfect dignity and remarkable self-control. Baron von Schoen would have dearly liked to become a hero, but found himself reduced to the sorry satisfaction of delivering, with a brutality he did not even attempt to palliate by politeness, first the Note addressed by the German Government to the Republic demanding to know within eighteen hours whether, in the case of a Russo-German war, France would remain neutral, and, later on, on the 3rd of August, 1914, the declaration of war based on the absurd pretext that French aviators had committed hostile acts in Germany and had violated the neutrality of Belgium. Surely an ambassador possessed of experience in international relations would have

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tried to persuade his Government to find a more plausible subject upon which to quarrel with France.

So much for Baron von Schoen. He showed himself an excellent servant but a tactless diplomat. There can be no question of ever entrusting him with the interests of his country during the future congress, but it is not beyond the limits of probability that Count von Pourtalès will be asked to attend.

Count von Pourtalès speaks excellent French, has delightful manners, and can write in another language than his own without a single error, which is more than most German diplomats can boast.

It is my opinion that Count von Pourtalès completely misunderstood the Russian character in spite of the ten years or so which he spent in Petrograd. He never realised what was going on around him, nor the great importance of the mission with which M. Delcassé was entrusted when he was persuaded to accept the post of representative of the Republic at the Court of the Tsar. He had preconceived ideas as to the efforts made by France, and especially by the French Press, to persuade Russia that she ought to prepare herself for the eventuality of a war, but he attributed to them a success to which, unfortunately in a certain sense, they did not attain, because events have proved that the military preparation of Russia was not so forward when the war broke out as most people thought. But, with it all, Count von Pourtalès was firm in his conviction that Russia would never dare to declare war—in which, perhaps, he was not

Baron von Wangenheim

so very wrong, because it is incontestable that the Russian Government almost humiliated itself in its efforts to avoid it. What he failed utterly to see was that Germany was urging it on and intriguing to the utmost to bring it about. No one was more surprised at the conduct of the German Government during those eventful days than the German Ambassador in Petrograd, who, up to the moment when he had found himself compelled to hand over to M. Sazonov the ultimatum formulated by Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg, had firmly believed that no one in his own country wanted to see the end of the good relations which had existed with Russia for more than one hundred years, and which were based on so many common interests, as well as on family ties between the two reigning houses of Hohenzollern and of Romanoff.

When the war broke out Baron von Wangenheim, at Constantinople, whose conduct there gave proofs of great shrewdness and considerable ability, and Prince Lichnowsky, in London, were, perhaps, the two ablest diplomats the German Empire possessed. During the whole time of his stay in London Prince Lichnowsky tried by all means to efface the bad impression that somehow had prevailed in Great Britain for upwards of ten years in regard to the policy of William II., and especially concerning the constant aggrandisement of the German navy.

Prince Lichnowsky was a nobleman with an almost regal position, which he did not owe to his official career; indeed, he relinquished office after his father's death to take upon himself the cares inseparable from the adminis-

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tration of large properties such as he possessed. The Prince had always been considered as one of the Emperor William's personal friends, and had shown considerable tact in all his dealings, as well as a certain gentleness and finesse not often met with among his compatriots. He was, moreover, married to a very charming woman, who considerably helped him to make the German Embassy in London a pleasant meeting-place for Society. Being so rich, he could afford the luxury of holding opinions of his own, as well as of expressing them whenever he chose. His conduct at the time of the crisis was, and always remained, most correct. But—he knew nothing of the real intentions of his Government; it purposely kept him in the dark, and he failed to appreciate the spirit of England and of the English nation when it found itself confronted by the violation of a sacred treaty to which it had given its sanction and signature. Prince Liehnowsky was just as much persuaded as Herr von Jagow himself that England would never go to war for the sake of a “scrap of paper,” even though, as Sir Edward Gosechen remarked so well, “the signature of England was affixed to it.”

The fact was that the Wilhelmstrasse was still under the delusion that England would always maintain the attitude of splendid isolation favoured by Lord Salisbury, and that she would never, under any pretext whatever, allow herself to be entangled in the complications and adventures of a European war. Germany firmly believed that England was far too selfish to lend any other aid

A British Precedent

than fine promises and fine words to any allies that she might have, and that she would never draw the sword on behalf of anyone for fear of compromising either her prestige or her personal welfare and comfort. Therein existed the initial mistake in the whole ghastly business, and surely if Germany had possessed diplomats or statesmen worthy of the name she should have avoided it. Their blindness is the more remarkable because they had the precedent of 1870. In that year the German Staff wanted to obtain a free passage for the Prussian Army through Belgian territory, but Prince von Bismarck was the first to oppose such a plan, and in the British Parliament Lord Granville, in the House of Lords, and Mr. Gladstone, in the Commons, declared that under no pretext whatever would England allow the neutrality of Belgium to be violated. Mr. Gladstone, in almost the same words as Mr. Asquith in 1914, said that any attack committed against Belgium would be "the direst crime that ever stained the pages of history."

If the German Foreign Office had taken the trouble to act on the advice of the great Catherine of Russia, and studied "the future in the history of the past," it would have recognised this fact, and not undervalued the influence that its conduct was bound to have on English public opinion, nor believed for one single instant that the English people would look unmoved upon the spectacle of the flagrant violation of treaties.

Throughout the crisis German statecraft showed itself the weakest and the worst informed in the whole of

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Europe. Not only has it branded itself with a reputation for utter incapacity, but it has led the German people into its own errors of judgment, its own false appreciation of facts that have never existed. When the German nation realises the abyss into which its leaders have allowed it to fall an awful day of reckoning will come. It will ask of its leaders, as of old was asked of Varus : “What have you done with my legions?”

I have mentioned Baron von Wangenheim. He is the only Prussian diplomat who has no decisive mistake to his credit. At Constantinople he was able to counteract all the efforts of M. Bompard, the French Ambassador, and an exceedingly able diplomat, to persuade Turkey to remain neutral in the great struggle. At one time it had seemed as if M. Bompard might succeed, especially as Sir Louis Mallet, the English Ambassador, added the weight of his personal arguments to those expressed by the Frenchman. It is no secret that large advantages were promised to Turkey if she would but listen to the Triple Understanding and recognise in which direction lay her best interests. Unfortunately—and there again we see the struggle between honesty and its reverse—neither of these two gentlemen would resort to the means which in Turkey more than anywhere else plays such a considerable part in public life, whereas Germany showed herself prodigal in guns and ammunition, in rifles and officers, and in pouring out money whenever Turkey wanted a loan. An unlimited credit also was opened at Krupp's, of which Enver Pasha hastened to make use.

German Undercurrents

It was chiefly amongst such people as the enterprising Pasha that Baron von Wangenheim had made friends. The Baron is a man of unusual ability, who under a quiet manner and an apparent apathy hides great determination and an iron will. He followed with the most intense interest all the incidents connected with the Austro-Servian crisis. It was rumoured at the time, indeed, that it was through him that the Cabinet of Vienna obtained what it considered were proofs of the complicity of certain influential, though not perhaps official, personages of Belgrade Society in the conspiracy against the Archduke Francis Ferdinand. It was upon this information that Count Berchtold formulated the extraordinary and insolent demands of Austria upon Servia.

It was afterwards remarked that during the few weeks that followed immediately upon the assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy there were constant communications exchanged between the German Embassy in Constantinople and the Prussian Legation at Belgrade, and that immediately after Baron von Griesinger received a letter from Baron von Wangenheim he repaired to the Austrian Minister, Baron Giesl. The two diplomats held long conversations, the secrets of which remained a mystery to the whole of the world, save, perhaps, to M. Hartwig, the Russian Minister, who contrived generally to keep himself well informed upon everything that was going on at Belgrade. Incidentally, it is certain that his premature and sudden death removed

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a formidable enemy from the path of Austro-German diplomacy.

The Servian Government could do nothing, of course, to interfere with this exchange of views between two colleagues, but several people who ought to be well able to know the truth continue to assert that had it not been for the efforts of Baron von Wangenheim at Constantinople it is doubtful whether Count Berchtold could have been induced to launch the bomb that was to destroy part of Europe and completely change the features of the rest.

Upon reviewing the actions of the different representatives of the German Court at the time the war broke out, I feel inclined to think that those of Baron von Wangenheim, though they may not perhaps bear a close scrutiny, will nevertheless appear as the least reprehensible from the intellectual point of view. He at least understood the character of the people with whom he had to deal. He worked for a certain aim, and he did it thoroughly, but there was no attempt to deceive the public in his actions, and he never pretended that right was wrong and vice versa. He was not duped either by circumstances, by unforeseen events, or by his own Government. He knew very well what was expected of him, and tried to perform it to the best of his ability; and, on the whole, among the mistakes and the incapacity or credulity of his colleagues, the figure that he cut was not such a sorry one after all.

If Baron von Wangenheim erred, it was on the side

Prince von Bülow

of caution, and if he succeeded so well, relatively speaking, because the ultimate end of his efforts remains to be seen, it is certainly due to his personal merits, not to any directions he may have received from Berlin, where it was desired when the war broke out that Turkey should come in at once. That Baron von Wangenheim did not obey implicitly the orders given to him by Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg, but preferred to wait for the natural development of a situation that his chief would have liked to see brutally handled, will always remain to his credit, and proves, at least, that he is capable of personal initiative, a quality of which most German diplomats are sadly in want.

Prince von Bülow also could boast of initiative; he, indeed, took too much upon himself on occasion. I have already related how he allowed himself to be hoodwinked in Rome by Baron Sonnino, and refused until the last minute to admit that Italy would throw in her lot with that of the Triple Understanding. Notwithstanding his occasional attacks of blindness—which, however, only occurred when it was against his interests or personal inclinations to notice anything that was going on before his eyes—he is certainly a clever diplomat, and gifted with more delicacy of touch than the generality of his colleagues.

Prince von Bülow was cradled in diplomacy, having been at the school of Prince von Bismarck, and begun his *apprentissage* in the Wilhelmstrasse at a time when every word uttered there inspired respect and gave rise

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to speculations as to what it really meant. His father, too, who had occupied for a considerable length of time the position of Foreign Secretary, had been a diplomat of considerable talent, whose lessons and experience had not been lost on his son. Young Bülow had grown up at a time when Prussia was slowly emerging from her second-rate position and was preparing herself for her future great destinies. This had been an education in itself, and its teachings had imprinted themselves deeply upon the mind of the young man in a manner calculated to influence the whole current of his life.

If von Bülow had had genius instead of talent he might have succeeded in taking the place of Prince Bismarck instead of merely occupying it. Unfortunately, his intellect, though very shrewd and capable of entering into the various intricacies of political life, lacked that flash of something, unknown to the majority of men, that constitutes the difference between real greatness and the desire to accomplish great things. The first Chancellor of the German Empire possessed the first, whilst Prince von Bülow has only occasionally felt the flutterings of a nebulous wish to make a stir.

In general, Prince von Bülow is too active, too eager, too fond of criticising the things that he does not do, and of blaming those for which he does not care. Imperious in his temper when he wants something, he never has enough patience to wait until it comes within his reach, but snatches it away from those who possess it with a lack of consideration truly Prussian. He believes strongly

Bülow and Italy

in his own cleverness, is habitually entirely elusive in what he says and does, and is reputed to have no hesitation in trampling his own expressed convictions under his feet if by so doing he can achieve something which otherwise he would not.

At one time Prince von Bülow had hoped to govern with the sole help of his personal intelligence the whole of that vast structure called the German Empire, and he never forgave the Emperor William II. for having deprived him of that supreme triumph for which he had worked and toiled for many years. When he had to retire into private life, unlike Prince Bismarck, he kept to himself the indignation that he undoubtedly felt at the offhand manner with which he had been asked to resign. This reticence did not prevent him, however, from suggesting, either by his sighs or by his ironical smiles, that he considered that the master who had shown himself so ungrateful for his past services was hurrying Germany along a very bad road indeed. In the seclusion of his private life he believed firmly that one day he would rule again, and was habitually looking ahead far more often than he was given credit for. Even when he had to leave Rome after Italy had declared war on Austria, he managed to conclude with Baron Sonnino a tacit kind of understanding which resulted in the strange incident of Italy being at war with Francis Joseph but not with the Emperor William.

Taking all these various things into consideration, I should feel inclined, if I were asked on whom will fall

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the choice of Germany to represent her in the future negotiations, to nominate Prince von Bülow, Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg, perhaps Herr von Jagow, if he is still in office—a thing that a considerable number of people doubt—Prince Radolin, whose vast experience and thorough knowledge of Polish affairs would prove most useful in an assembly where the fate of Poland must come under discussion; Baron von Wangenheim, most undoubtedly; Prince Lichnowsky, probably; and one or two of the more prominent military personalities. Apart from these men I only see Count von Pourtalès, or Count Bernstorff, or Baron von Tschirsky, whose presence would, however, be more useful in Vienna, as somebody will be wanted to infuse into the mind of the Emperor Francis Joseph a proper conviction of the line of conduct that he ought to follow when called upon to give an opinion or a reply concerning matters which the congress will submit to him.

IX

ENGLAND

WHEN the full story of the Great War comes to be written in its rude nakedness, and history is asked to pronounce its verdict, the responsibilities of each of the different nations who took part in it will be fixed with dispassionate justice, as they ought to be, but could not be at a time when the struggle was raging in its abominable and merciless fury. On that day it will be seen that all the countries involved, with the exception of England, had interested motives, either of aggression or of defence, that made them rush into the fray. England alone went to war for the honour of her signature. England gave to a sceptic and selfish world a noble example of disinterestedness and of chivalry which will be written in the pages of her national existence in letters of gold and will remain engraved in her memory with tears of blood.

I am laying particular stress upon the unselfishness that characterised the whole conduct of England all through the trying days when the destinies of Europe hung in the balance, because to those who did not know the true heart of Great Britain it came in the light of a surprise. Being of foreign birth, and having spent most

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of my life on the Continent, I can say with authority that English policy had always been considered abroad as being directed by motives of personal interest, and few believed she could be capable of rising to the heights of heroism upon which she stood for such a long time without flinching and without one single moment of weakness from the day she declared war. Such an example of glorious abnegation will be appreciated by history as it deserves, even if the present generation fails to see the real and splendid beauty of such conduct. England has well deserved of humanity during this crisis, not only from the moral point of view, but also by the ability and shrewdness of her statesmen, the enthusiasm of the nation, and, lastly, the spirit of self-sacrifice that has inspired all her actions, her coolness, presence of mind, and impartial common sense.

With an inflexibility of purpose worthy of his great character, Sir Edward Grey, whenever Herr von Jagow or Count Berchtold tried to avoid giving a definite reply to straightforward questions, brought matters back to the point, and refused to allow idle sophisms to divert attention from the main issue.

This is not mere friendly flattery, but exact truth, as can be traced in the various Blue, Orange or Yellow books published by the different chancelleries of Europe. One, indeed, cannot restrain an expression of admiration for the clear-sightedness of the English diplomats and the patience with which Downing Street sought to dissipate any errors that might have arisen to prevent people from

King George V

grasping the real issues at stake. Unfortunately, Great Britain, too, had to deal with an enemy who had made up his mind beforehand not to be convinced, and who, moreover, never believed that Britain would go to war for the sake of keeping intact her promise to maintain Belgian neutrality.

England had also the advantage of a Sovereign it could respect. In a century when, every day, Royalty loses something of its prestige, when the barriers that formerly separated monarchs from their subjects are falling one by one, the Royal House of England has a secure and growing place in the affections of the English nation.

In his difficult position as a constitutional Sovereign, obliged more or less to accept the decisions of his Parliament, King George V. has nevertheless contrived to set the seal of his personality on the whole attitude of the British people, and of persuading them that not only was he heart and soul with them in their noble resolve, but also that he would never lend himself to anything that might be construed as a surrender of right to might.

The King is a rare character. Rather secretive and very discreet, he does not say much, but he thinks a good deal, and has an especially strong sense of his responsibilities as the Sovereign of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and ruler of the vast British Empire.

King George V. knows more of life and its difficulties than monarchs do generally, owing to the fact that he was not expected to become one, and that he was brought up much more freely than would have been the case had he

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been the eldest son of his parents. He began his public career as any other naval officer would have done, and in the various journeys which he undertook all over the world he contrived to observe a great deal and to learn even more. When he found himself unexpectedly faced with the great change in his position brought about by his elder brother's death, he was neither surprised nor dazed by it, but began at once, without ostentation, to prepare himself for the new duties which were bound in the course of time to be his own. He was assisted in the task by the experience of his father, who, it is no secret, initiated him into the art of government with truly parental kindness and tried to make him participate in it as far as lay within his power. The late King, who was in so many ways the most remarkable man of his generation, never felt that jealousy of his heir which has so often impaired the good relations of monarchs with their eldest sons. He knew very well that the authority he wielded could not be wrested from him, and that ultimately it would be for the benefit of his kingdom if he showed its future King how he ought to rule.

During the last years of the life of Edward VII. the then Prince of Wales used to come every day to see his father at Buckingham Palace, when the Court was in London, and to work together with him, reading dispatches to him, and hearing his wise remarks upon their contents. When the King died his son was so well instructed that he could at once enter fully into the duties of his new position and pursue the same wise

King George and his Subjects

policy that had brought Great Britain into closer contact with other European nations than had ever been the case before. In a word, he could appreciate the great advantage of the Triple Understanding, and go on strengthening it by all means in his power.

King George V. quickly became yet more popular as Monarch than he had been as Prince, and he and his gracious Queen soon attained to a lasting place in the affections of the people. He showed great interest in the welfare of the working classes, and the journeys which he undertook, together with the Queen, to the industrial centres of England made him acquainted with the needs of his subjects and also initiated him into the details of daily life in their several differing conditions. He could, therefore, speak with authority when local disputes among workmen and their employers arose, and more than once it was owing to the King's advice and soundness of judgment in the discussions concerning these differences that they were settled in a relatively short time.

King George liked to go about and to show himself in his overseas dominions, and thus heightened the prestige of Royalty in the Colonies, bringing each into closer touch with the Motherland. When he went to India to be proclaimed Emperor, his presence evoked an outburst of loyalty the beneficent consequences of which can be appreciated to-day when India has responded so nobly to the appeal of the Mother Country.

King George V. possesses in a marked degree the

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useful quality of tact. He understood perfectly in whatever he did where he ought to stop and when he could proceed; moreover, he never preached what he did not practise. The simple family life which the King liked to lead with his consort and their children did more than could have been supposed at first to put an end to the spirit of restlessness that pervaded the existence of the upper classes in England, where it seemed as if no one could stay three days in one place. It still continued fashionable to spend one's winters on the Riviera or at Cairo, but home life also came into favour, and many of the noble English mansions that had remained closed for years reopened their doors, and their owners grew to love home life with an affection akin to the home-loving spirit their forefathers had felt in long past days. The influence of the Queen, too, made itself felt among Englishwomen, whom she encouraged in domestic virtues and the delights of family duties and pleasures. Each of the Sovereigns thereby unconsciously raised the moral standard of the whole English nation by the purity and earnestness of their lives, and when the hour of peril struck it found the nation ready to meet it with dignity, without fear, and without hesitation or remorse.

In the matters of government King George always listens to his Ministers with attention, and though he does not go beyond his rights, or, on the other hand, abrogates any of them, he still puts in his word wherever he considers it useful, and does not subscribe blindly to measures presented for his approval or signature. He

Standing by his Guns

reads the newspapers assiduously, so as to keep himself well informed as to the opinion of the country, and never hesitates to discuss this or that point with his advisers when he does not find himself in entire accord with them. He has shown himself a faithful servant of his country, watching over her interests, and trying to lead her on the path of prosperity and of greatness.

The personal part played by George V., when the complications arose which were to lead to the war, has not yet been fully revealed to the public. He applied himself with a rare conscientiousness to smooth down the differences that had arisen between his cousin of Berlin and his cousin of Petrograd, and many more telegrams than have been published were exchanged between Buckingham Palace, Potsdam, and Tsarskoye Selo. None deplored more than he his failure to avert the dire catastrophe. But this did not prevent King George from standing by his guns, and when at last he found himself compelled to draw the sword he did it without hesitation. Not only did the whole British nation stand by King George in this resolve, but he found in his Ministers the wise and intelligent help of men of supreme ability and clear understanding, who fully realised that the stake was an enormous one, and that it required unwavering strength and decision of mind to play the game upon which the future peace and tranquillity of mankind depended.

It has seemed to me, on looking back over the history of Europe during the many years that have passed since

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I was young, that England is the only nation who, in this age of militarism, has succeeded in preserving unimpaired the best traditions of her diplomacy. One has only to read the dispatches to realise the shrewdness of such men as Sir Edward Goschen, or Sir Maurice de Bunsen, or Sir Louis Mallet.

I must now ask my readers to forgive me for turning briefly to a subject that has already been treated in various books by people far more competent than myself to discuss it. I am trying to make short sketches of the diplomatic work of different statesmen in different countries, together with an appreciation of their personalities, and I think and firmly believe that, in the circumstances which preceded and brought about the war, England acted most loyally and intelligently; that, moreover, all her efforts have been directed toward the maintenance of a peace of which she did not despair even at the last moment, when everybody else considered that war had become unavoidable. I consider it necessary, therefore, to refer to some of the efforts of Sir Edward Grey and his colleagues to prevent the explosion.

We must first analyse the conduct of Sir Edward from the moment when the Austrian ultimatum made action imperative if peace were to be preserved. Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg, as the mouthpiece of Germany, has accused the English Foreign Secretary of having excited public opinion against Germany, in Paris as well as in Petrograd, and of not having exercised his influence in favour of peace. This strange accusation is easily con-

Sir Edward Grey

tradicted, but it may not be without interest to mention a few simple facts which will go far to prove the astonishing way in which the German Chancellor reads and understands history.

If we examine the details of the procedure of Sir Edward Grey, we find, first of all, that as soon as the news of the Austrian ultimatum reached him he at once had the Servian Government advised that, in his opinion, it should accept it without unnecessary irritation, and exercise moderation in its reply. The hint was taken, as we all know, and the reply of M. Pashitch to the arrogant demands formulated by the Ball Platz surprised by its meekness even the best friends of Servia.

Apart from this, the English Foreign Secretary upheld the demand of Russia to lengthen the limit of time granted by the ultimatum for a reply, and directed Sir Maurice de Bunsen to use his best efforts at the Ball Platz to obtain it. To this, however, Count Berchtold refused positively to agree, an uncompromising attitude which the German Ambassador, Baron von Tschirsky, did not think it worth while to discourage. Despite the unsuccessful issue of his effort, Sir Edward Grey at once suggested the idea of a conference. His offer was accepted by France, Italy and Russia, but refused by Germany and by Austria, upon which Sir Edward—who had determined to try every means to avoid the breaking out of a war—asked the German Government to propose any other step which it might consider effective on the part of the four great Powers not interested in the

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question to put an end to the conflict or at least to localise it. No reply whatever was given to this suggestion, which was simply treated with contempt by the Wilhelmstrasse as well as at Vienna. Instead, a remarkable proposition was made by Germany that Great Britain should stand aside and see France denuded of her colonies and Belgium devastated. Sir Edward Grey, however, did not allow himself to be discouraged, and, after very properly refusing such overtures, pressed for the acceptance of the desire, expressed by Germany herself, that Austria and Russia ought to be allowed to settle between themselves the knotty questions which were threatening the peace of the world, the other Powers exercising their influence "to allay the mutual suspicions of Vienna and Petersburg."

Any other man would have resented conduct which did not even take notice of the most elementary forms of courtesy, but the English Foreign Secretary was above such petty susceptibility. He instantly applied himself to find something else capable of bringing Austria to her senses. And he succeeded, for Austria agreed, and Russia was only too willing to talk things over. But here Germany plainly showed her hand. There was little doubt, after her overt suggestions to England, that she meant war, but on the 31st of July she openly proclaimed her aggressive disposition by sending the ultimatum to Russia.

A marked difference is observable between the diplomatic courtesies of the two nations. German diplomacy,

Anxious Days

instead of answering the British proposal, made dishonouring suggestions. Sir Edward Grey, disdaining to notice the double insult of an ignored proposal and of the implied willingness on England's part to barter treaty obligations for the sake of British immunity, showed his intense desire for peace by making alternative suggestions for co-operation in maintaining future freedom from war. And, when all this had failed, Sir Edward, as a last resort, declared himself ready to recommend France, as well as Russia, to agree to any reasonable German or Austrian offer that would put an end to the conflict. But no such offer or suggestion was made, and in the meantime Germany finally decided the question in the way it was feared she would.

Right up to the 1st of August—the day when war was declared upon Russia—Sir Edward Grey kept sending dispatches all over Europe in the endeavour to prevent the calamity even at the eleventh hour. The British Blue Book contains no fewer than twenty-eight dispatches exchanged between London and the principal European capitals during the 29th of July and the 1st of August.

Notwithstanding this determined effort to preserve peace, Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg declared in the Reichstag that Sir Edward Grey had done all that he could to urge France and Russia to go to war.

How much more clear-sighted was Sir Edward Grey and how much better informed were British diplomats than the statesmen of even France and Russia, is seen in the suggestion made by Russia and France that England

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should declare that she would take up arms on behalf of these two countries were Germany to start hostilities. Such a course, M. Cambon and M. Sazonov thought, would cause Germany to think twice. They were wrong. The real situation was better understood in England and clearly explained in the views of Sir G. Buchanan, the British Ambassador at Petrograd, who reported to Sir Edward Grey his conversation with M. Sazonov : “ I said that his Excellency was mistaken if he believed that the cause of peace could be promoted by our telling the German Government that they would have to deal with us as well as with Russia and France if they supported Austria by force of arms. Their attitude would merely be stiffened by such a menace, and we could only induce her to use her influence at Vienna to avert war by approaching her in the capacity of a friend who was anxious to preserve peace. . . .”

I make no excuse for having referred at some length to matters already well known on the subject of the events that preceded the war. I do so out of the desire to point out that Sir Edward Grey is the only statesman who has shown that he clearly understood the whole situation, and for the reason that it is to him that Europe must look in the future to settle the terms of peace. He is the one man whose coolness of judgment, shrewdness of wit, and high moral character will make it possible for him to suggest conditions likely to be accepted by the interested parties. He preserved the dignity of his country under the most trying circumstances a Minister



THE RT. HON. H. H. ASQUITH



M. RENÉ VIVIANI

Lord Lansdowne

ever found himself obliged to face. Had Germany not invaded Belgium, it is probable that Great Britain would to this day have remained neutral. In this attitude on this question the British nation was worthy of such a great Minister as Sir Edward Grey, and the Minister is well worthy of the responsible honour of representing the interests of the nation when the time comes.

Very probably Lord Lansdowne will lend Sir Edward the help of his experience, of his great name, and of his popularity amongst foreign diplomats; and it is to be hoped that Mr. Asquith will find it possible to join them. His trained outlook will be a distinct asset in that assembly, to detect the true meaning of whatever diplomatic suggestions are made and to probe the real import of the pretty phrasings that will certainly be used. The dignity and firmness with which the Prime Minister dealt with the situation in August, 1914, will long be remembered. On the Continent England has had a name for dalliance, and probably Germany relied on the reluctance to decide which is not unknown in the British Parliament. They were deceived. In this, the question of a nation's pledged word, it is to the eternal honour of Mr. Asquith that he hesitated not a single moment, but flung out the challenge of right and justice to meet an arrogant and cannon-proud aggressor.

It will be England's duty to take the lead in the deliberations of that congress, because England will hold the key to the whole of the European situation, and the attitude of England that will determine the final

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readjustment after the war, just as much as she will have to bear its principal burden. Both France and Russia will follow her lead, because they know that England has always stood at the head of civilisation, has always been the champion as well as the pioneer of progress.

I imagine that, among others who will be called to help Sir Edward Grey in his tremendous task, Sir Maurice de Bunsen and Sir Edward Goschen will not be forgotten. The former, as his dispatches prove, is an unusually perspicacious diplomat, who at once saw through the bluff put up by the Ball Platz. He recognised that there was another and far more powerful reason behind the extraordinary step that Austria had taken of her own accord, as it was said, and as no one believed who knew anything about the relations existing between Vienna and Berlin. Sir Maurice did not fail to warn his Government of the intention of Germany to make Austria bear the responsibility of an aggression she was determined to force upon Europe. In this respect the communications exchanged between Sir Maurice de Bunsen and the English Foreign Office constitute most interesting and instructive reading, and can be advantageously compared with those that Sir Edward Goschen sent to his chiefs at the same time. They throw on the whole conduct of the Cabinets of Berlin and of Vienna a light which, for the sake of their reputation in history, it would have been far better had never shone upon them.

In a congress the experience of these two diplomats

Sir Edward Goschen

would be of enormous value and considerably facilitate the task of Sir Edward Grey and of Lord Lansdowne. It is likely, therefore, that they will be called to attend the deliberations which shall precede the conclusion of peace. Sir Edward Goschen particularly, having spent some time in Russia as Councillor of the British Embassy in Petrograd, had the opportunity to come into contact with Russian official spheres, and may be a valuable help to the plenipotentiaries of the Tsar, who will feel more at home with him than with an utter stranger. He is a quiet man, with a strong will, who never loses his temper, and in presence of the greatest difficulties finds generally a way out.

The task which England has before her is a stupendous one. There can be no room for doubting that she will pull through, but it is a question whether she will not find herself compelled to resort to drastic measures in order to do so. The time for illusions is past, and it is best to look matters in the face. Practically speaking, England is the only nation who can go on fighting indefinitely, who has the men and the money to do so. England, who, whilst all the other belligerents are gradually getting weaker, is, on the contrary, getting stronger from the military point of view, more experienced from the technical one, and more martial than she was at the beginning of the struggle, which at first was not understood by her in its tragic seriousness, but of which the whole English nation at the present day appreciates the importance. England can be the saviour

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of the civilisation of the world, and therefore we all look toward England and toward her statesmen to guide the deliberations to a just and an honourable issue.

It is not political questions only that will be discussed during this congress. Financial and industrial matters will also have to be touched upon, especially in view of the commercial clauses that Germany will certainly insist on being inserted into the peace treaty. Mr. Lloyd George will probably have to defend the interests of his country as to that point, and it is but to be expected that he will give sound, common-sense advice concerning this most important question. He will be one of the most picturesque figures at the congress, and probably a centre of interest for its spectators. His personality has always been the object of great curiosity abroad, where he is relatively but little known, and his actions will therefore be looked upon with considerable attention.

It is likely that Sir Louis Mallet, and possibly Lord Robert Cecil, the distinguished son of a great father, will form members of the British mission, the latter in his capacity of Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs. These names command respect, and not one of the statesmen who will meet them as representatives of other countries will be likely to look upon any of the British statesmen and diplomats as men of less calibre than themselves. Their names are above reproach, their achievements have sustained the most severe tests, and they will stand before the congress as fit men to represent the greatness and nobility of the British Empire.

X

GOOD-BYE

AS the time approaches to say "Good-bye" to my readers I have some misgiving at the thought that, all the time, I have been talking of a congress and of the people who may be expected to take part in it. Yet I find comfort in the realisation that the topic is not unimportant. It also may possess some element of interest at the present time, when the doings and sayings of the sovereigns and statesmen I have described are fresh in the mind; while yet again, in those days when the actual congress is being formed, the words I have here written may usefully recur to the memory.

The debates of such an assembly will bring out the real qualities of the men engaged, will test character, intellect, judgment, diplomacy, as seldom men have been tested before. Towering above the personalities will appear the sovereigns whose countries have had to bear the brunt of the cruelly bitter and desolating war. Those sovereigns I have tried to describe as I have known them, and as I believe them to be according to their conduct in the moments of supreme crisis they have had to face. About one, the German Emperor, I have said nothing for many reasons. I have known him in his youth; I

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have watched him in his manhood ; and have come to the conclusion that dead illusions are like dead little children—they should be left undisturbed in their graves. His name will remain engraved in the annals of the world, but how it is as well not to try to think. Nearly all of us weep over the loss of a dear one who, but for him, would not have perished. I have, therefore, abstained from expressing any judgment concerning his person, though I have said freely what I thought about his Ministers and his advisers.

The great obstacle to a prompt ending of the work that will devolve upon the congress will consist in the necessity for peace not being quite what each party expects it should be. Concessions will have to be made on each side. Neither will Germany obtain the advantages for which she went to war, nor will the Allies crush Germany so entirely as they desire. A *modus vivendi* must be found that will put an end to the spirit of militarism to which Europe owes her present misfortunes ; at the same time Prussia must be left some of the privileges that were formerly hers.

In saying this I am looking with impartiality and common sense at the situation such as it presents itself to my eyes. Both sides engaged in the struggle have had successes, and each of them will have to admit that such has been the case. It is the work of England to minimise these advantages on the part of her enemy, and to enlarge upon them on her own and on that of her friends. In Germany exactly the same thing is going on in an



ALBERT I.
King of the Belgians



Responsibility of the Allies

inverted order. Both sides will have to make even more colossal sacrifices than hitherto. In the interest of humanity neither England nor France must fall short of supreme effort. Russia, for the moment, is gathering her strength anew.

Germany, true to the convictions fostered of old by her diplomats at Petrograd, is reckoning upon a new and formidable revolution breaking out, the consequences of which might prove disastrous for the throne of the Romanoffs. This was the reason of her hurried march into the interior of Russia and is the secret source of the energy with which she pursues the armies of the Tsar. She is satisfied that every new defeat will hasten the general revolt of the nation against Russian bureaucracy. It must not be forgotten that for a whole year the country had been told that she was victorious, and that her troops would soon enter Berlin. Suddenly she had to learn that Galicia was wrested from her, that Poland had fallen into the hands of the enemy, that Lithuania and Courland were invaded. Germany counted upon the rebound of the sentiments of a people losing thus all the illusions which they had cherished for such a long time. There is one thing which Germany has forgotten, which the world must remember : Russia has an invincible strength of resistance ; she has an army which for personal courage cannot be equalled. The people, too, are full of patriotism, of faith, of determination to go on until the end.

It is the responsibility of England to help her pass safely through the peril of the present hour ; and

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England, I know, is doing so. The enemy who believes he can conquer her makes a mistake. Yet we must recognise that the longer our victory is deferred the worse becomes the situation. The strength of Russia is unimpaired; her armies retreated in good order, and the moment they are able to renew the struggle with even chances they can begin again.

And, now that the Tsar is in personal command, an enormous moral force will be added to Russian arms. The "Little Father" is leading them, and to the Russian he represents Church and State and home and everything.

There is no denying, as the *Morning Post* so justly remarked a month or two ago, that the German organisation is something quite wonderful; but that does not prove that the German nation is worthy to stand at the head of the civilisation of the world. Nor will the congress prove that the troubles of Europe are over. I venture to express my conviction that Richelieu was right when he said that "It is not difficult to make a war, or to win it. Complications only come when the time for making peace arrives." These complications have been before me the whole time that I have been writing this book, which may, perhaps, prepare the public for them by making it acquainted with the character of the men who, in all human probability, will have to decide how they can heal the wounds of Europe.

The task will not be an easy one. It will require unusual intelligence, knowledge of mankind, of history, and of the resources of all the nations at present engaged

“Something more Glorious”

in the struggle to bring a happy peace accepted by all. It will also require a thorough appreciation of the meaning of patriotism, in the sense that it does not infer a yielding to the passions of the crowd, but setting the higher interests of one's native land before even monetary triumphs that would appeal to the vanity of the masses, and make them see laurels where only green leaves exist.

It will require courage, too, that civil courage which is superior even to the courage displayed on the battlefield, where the example of others and the excitement of the fray stirs men to action, for the decisions, whatever they may be, are sure to excite discontent in some direction.

Such disturbing elements, we sincerely pray, will be overcome, so that a peace may be arrived at which, if not permanent, will at least last through several generations. Only then will it become possible for the world to develop itself quietly and without fear of unexpected surprises coming to disturb and to destroy the work and the labour of years. Only then will it become easy for humanity again to breathe freely. In that happy day mankind will at last come to the conclusion that, though it may be a great thing to be a conqueror, there is something better than this vain satisfaction of the moment, something much more glorious and far more beautiful.

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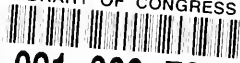
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